









# THE KINGDOM OF EARTH

*By*  
CEDRIC DOVER

*Ten outstanding essays on*

FOUNDATIONS

A YOUNG MAN'S CREDO

THE INFLUENCE OF RE-  
LIGION

RELIGION AND MODERN


RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

EDUCATION: TODAY  
AND TOMORROW

RELIGION AND SEX

EUGENICS AND G. K.  
CHESTERTON

THE FOLLY OF WAR





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# THE KINGDOM OF EARTH





To  
A WOMAN AND THREE MEN  
(M.H.W., H.E.R., S.M., & W.H.T.T.)

Your originality, your fearlessness, your friendship, and your affection for me have inspired, and helped me to systematise, the thoughts I have tried to express in the pages which follow. I dedicate them, therefore, to you as a slight mark of gratitude and reciprocated affection. You will have to share the unworthy tribute, because . . . . . well, you see the difficulty?

. . . . . We are drawing near  
Unatlassed boundaries of a larger sphere.  
With awe, I wait, till Science leads us on,  
Into the full effulgence of its dawn.

WILCOX

# THE KINGDOM OF EARTH

[ TEN ESSAYS ]

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By  
CEDRIC DOVER

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*Be Bold !*

*Be Bold, Be Bold & Evermore Be Bold !*

*Be Not too Bold !*

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Racing, racing, little ants called men,

Where are you going to?

Nowhere!

Laboring, laboring, little ants called men,

What are you laboring for?

Nothing!

Laughing, laughing, little ants called men,

What are you laughing at? Yourselves?

Oh, No!

At same other ant that will not race like you,

Because he has a little understanding—just a little.

Building, building, little ants called men,

What are you building—in stone?

Worship them then, little ants called men,

For that is all you can understand.

Where are you going to—little ants called men,

When you have raced, labored, laughed and built?

*Back to the stones again, little ANTS CALLED MEN.*

EVE BALFOUR in *The New Orient*

## FOREWORD

I was schooled in a Roman Catholic institution for the 'sons of gentlemen', where the sons of the poor (who, of course, are not gentlemen) were sometimes admitted. A precocious child, at fifteen I decided that teaching in the service of Christ was my vocation. One day I told a friend of my decision. He replied: "My boy, read more, think more, before you take this step. Remember you are only a child yet." I was riled, but I took his advice. First I read Catholic apologetics. Occasionally I had spasms of doubt, but dismissed them (with increased prayers and devotion) as the work of the devil.

Then, the better to vilify those who did not recognise the supremacy of the Pope, I purchased a series of books on comparative religion. I was shocked at the similarity of my beliefs with those of the heathen I despised. Their religions were older. Could it be that the early Christians had borrowed from them? Satanic thoughts! But now my most ardent prayers would not dispel them.

I read still more, praying to be shown the right road. I was. And the local



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gownmaker lost an order. I was not much more than sixteen when I was pleased to call myself a Freethinker. I believed in no dogma, but I believed in God. I did not go to church, but I prayed at home. I told myself I had found Truth at last.

I was always interested in natural science. Now, I took it up seriously. Of course, Darwin and Huxley were horrible atheists, who said we had descended from monkeys. Well, let them say, but I certainly had no Simian ancestors. I would expose their heresies. So I bought their books and the stories of their lives. I found my teachers had been wrong—they could not have been deliberately lying. For neither Darwin nor Huxley had said our forefathers were monkeys. Moreover, they were not 'vile atheists', but lovers of Truth who had led the most exemplary lives. I passed naturally from pure monotheism to agnosticism.

Then I met the most enthusiastic, the most sympathetic, the most widely-read zoologist India has ever known. From him I learned not only the elements of zoology, but also of the other sciences; something of philosophy as well. I read more. I began to see Unity in the Universe. Matter was not

## FOREWORD

so different from Life after all.

I was not yet nineteen when I commenced a college career in zoology. I met two men who introduced me to the standard philosophers and the pioneers of modern thought. I read voraciously now; I argued for hours with my friends. I not only passed from a somewhat unsatisfactory agnosticism to a frank materialism, but reading and observation helped me to form a theory of life which satisfied my desire for immortality in a more rational manner than the expectation of a monotonous Hedonism in heaven, or an unpleasantly active existence in hell, had ever done. The maxim of Heraclitus became my guiding principle. The things that could be seen, heard and learned were what I prized the most.

Thus, in three years I relinquished my most cherished beliefs. It is a study in the efficacy of dogmatic religion. I determined to pass on my new-found knowledge to other young people like myself. I wrote these essays. A natural caution, however, prevented immediate publication.

That was nearly seven years ago. I continued to read, to think, and to discuss. But I am unable to add anything vital to my original manuscript. I could, of course, add

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discussions about this or that philosophical system; I could even increase each chapter to a book. I have not only resisted these temptations, but have vigorously tried to purge this book of those attempts at literary effect which satisfy the conceit of the writer but bewilder the reader.

For, this book is meant for those who have never heard of Bergson and think Descartes is the latest Parisian milliner, but who, nevertheless, wonder if there is any other explanation of this Kingdom of Earth beyond that offered by their Church—the Church which, since the War, they have so seldom attended. If I stimulate some of them to concentrated thinking, I would feel myself amply rewarded.

The learned critic will save himself much trouble if he remembers this, if he remembers that I have written, not for philosophers, but primarily for the youth I represent. And the youth I represent is largely ignorant, though less ignorant than their fathers. I can lay no claim to originality. In fact, if the serving of old wine in new bottles is plagiarism, then I am a plagiarist. But in that case there is very little which is New.

The sources on which I have drawn are

## ·FOREWORD·

too numerous to be individually acknowledged, and I do not think a formidable bibliography would serve any useful purpose. It must be mentioned, however, that in writing chapters two to five I have been particularly indebted to White's *History of the conflict Between Science and Theology in Christendom* and Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Science and Religion*. The arguments in the chapter on war are extended and elaborated in Nicolai's *Biology and War*. The reader who desires to read more about the subjects dealt with or suggested here should consult the catalogue of a good library or visit a bookstore. Advice about books will not help those who are not interested enough to do this, and those who are do not need my advice.

I deliberately refrain from addressing old women (of both sexes). For if they read me at all it will only be in the spirit which prompts them to read the latest shockers—to see what that perfectly dreadful *person* is saying.

Well, well, old women will be old women!

Calcutta  
11th April, 1929

C. D.



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CHAPTER I  
FOUNDATIONS

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## CHAPTER I

### FOUNDATIONS

*Science includes all knowledge, communicable and verifiable, which is reached by methodological observation and admits of concise, consistent and connected formulation.*

J. A. THOMSON

Sometime ago a famous Indian biologist told me that when he was in college a fellow-student once asked the Professor what science was. "You should have learned that before you came here," replied the nettled Professor, and went on with his explanation of cellular structure. That student left science for the law.

The incident made a deep impression on the man who told me the story. He is now a Professor, but he ignores cellular structure for his first lecture. He starts his course with a talk on the philosophical basis of science. And, as we must also understand the fundamental position of science to appreciate the pages which follow, I will take you into his lecture



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room on the day of his initial discourse.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he is saying, "you have just embarked on a course the magnitude of which you perhaps do not fully appreciate. You will not only have to grapple with the technical details of anatomy or physiology, but you will be faced with problems which will affect your entire outlook on life, your religious views, and your relations with your fellow-beings. For, the true biologist is not only a describer of new birds or butterflies, but a student of life in all its applications. You should, therefore, ask yourselves: What is this science which we are going to study, and how will it influence our future lives? Can any of you answer the question?"

A student in the front benches stands up. "I think I can, Sir. Science is the method of observation, experiment and deduction applied to natural phenomena, and is nothing more than trained and organised common-sense."

"Splendid," says the Professor, "I see you already know your Huxley. Well then, according to this definition, you will see that science is objective, that it is almost totally dependent on our sense impressions of the external reality for its facts. The vastness of the universe makes it intensely dynamic, not

## FOUNDATIONS

static, as is our knowledge of some single object, such as a book. We know our ego as distinct from everything else: we know that we exist, but that which is not ourselves we know only by our sense impressions. Thus, we can infer the existence of each other, but we cannot do more. We cannot infer the *real* nature of external objects, for we only perceive a group of sense impressions, and cannot assume that a book or a man is something other than these impressions. We cannot dogmatize, for instance, on the spirituality or otherwise of man. So, the nature of the thing itself is outside the realm of science.

It is the correlation of sense impressions, past and present, which result in consciousness, and is apparently the only means by which we may know anything outside our own minds. So anyone who restricts himself to drawing rational conclusions from his external experiences is, therefore, a scientist in the broadest meaning of the term. You will now see, I think, that the only kind of knowledge which we can regard as trustworthy, apart from subjective knowledge of ourselves, is objective or scientific knowledge. There is much proof for this statement in the fact that given a certain object any normal person will receive

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the same impressions as any other normal person, and can, therefore, derive from them similar conclusions, coming to a similar conception of its external nature. Do you follow me? Now, I can see you all want to ask if knowledge cannot be obtained subjectively, as the mystics are reputed to gain it. This is a delicate question, and one which cannot be ignored in these days. But it is impossible to know whether a being totally devoid of his senses could gain any knowledge, or even be conscious of his own existence. I do not despise intuition, however, for I have often found that a certain problem is so complex that I leave it aside. I am already engrossed in some other work when suddenly a possible explanation of the neglected problem flashes upon me. I work the thing out again, and quite often find that this intuitive knowledge has put me on the right road, but I would not dare to express a public opinion until I had objectively confirmed my intuitive explanation.

The great weakness of all short cuts to knowledge, or what we term revelation, intuition, and the like, is their individuality and consequent dissimilarity: it is well-known that revelations about a particular subject do not display a convincing commonness when

compared. Unfortunately, the desire for quick knowledge is very human, and the more complex the subject, such as the origin of life, the more prone are we to settle it by some obscure mental process. The value of intuition is essentially indefinite and transitory, and fades whenever the unknown is brought within the ken of science.

To revert to our definition. We have said that science is dynamic, progressive, but the word 'progressive' requires some explanation: it is used rather loosely. Progress implies a definite goal, so that if a man set out to walk from Westminster to Brighton, we can say he has progressed when he reaches the Three Bridges. In this sense is science progressive? I am inclined to answer in the negative, for even if science is progressing towards ultimate perfection, this in itself is a very indefinite goal. Let me give you an example. If we compare the Unknown to a long and tortuous cave, science is but the man with the lamp lighting the way in search for an opening. Who knows what will be discovered on the way, or what awaits him when he reaches the end of his journey, if he ever does?

This may sound pessimistic, but is not really so, for Hope is a rightly exalted, if

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usually abused, virtue; and, as Dean Inge says, it is safe to assume that we will go on hoping. And science has proved that we do not hope in vain. In a word the object of science is to know what there is to be known about natural phenomena—in this sense it has progressed—and even if it never solves the riddle of life the benefits it bequeathes to humanity in attempting to do so will more than compensate this arduous journey through the Unknown. You know only too well the benefits of science. And we may pity the few who would rather ride through Jerusalem on a donkey, for we can do the journey in the cars which science has made possible.

There are some who complain that science destroys imagination. But is there not in the potential possibilities of science scope for even the wildest imaginings? Mr. Wells has proved this. And strangely enough many of his prophecies have come true. We are faced with the possibility of untold development, a development which a few years hence will exceed anything we can visualise today.

It is also said that science is a tyrannical monarch. But, far from being a monarch, it is really the slave of humanity, and it would

be mere juggling with similes to argue that, as the adoption of slavery laid Imperial Rome in the dust, so science will banish the universe into a vacuum of Nothingness. If destruction is the inevitable result of the universal recognition of the importance of science, it will be but the destruction of irrationalism and cherished beliefs. Newspaper activity in connexion with such matters as the possible release of the atom has had its effect, in that numerous old women desire the detention of all scientists in a barren Helena, and it may be useful to remind them that if science is ever utilised for the destruction of humanity, it will be a tool in the hands of humanity itself. And what will be lost when all is lost?

So you see we are building up a system and contributing to knowledge which at any moment may be destroyed, and Hope is the motive power behind our efforts. 'The test of mankind (says F. S. Marvin) is to bring together the various aspects of human excellence, to see them as parts of one ideal and labour to approach it. This approach is progress, and if you say "progress of what and to what end", the answer can only be the progress of humanity, and the end further progress.'

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Pessimism has no place in the scheme of life. Perhaps our greatest philosophers are the little Cockneys who say: 'Life's darned funny'—and promptly proceed to make it funnier. You, who will someday be trained biologists, should consider it your duty to free yourselves from petty imaginings. Seek to make this existence a brighter one for those around you. Endeavour to follow the sober, steady lives of such men as Huxley; share also their humility and horror of idle speculations about the Unknown. Descartes, after a life-time of intensive thought said: "I think I am."

The Professor continues, but we may leave him here with the remark that he is as typical of the saner outlook which is beginning to pervade our lives, as his own teacher was typical of the prejudices of an age which we are leaving behind us.

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CHAPTER II

A YOUNG MAN'S CREDO

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## CHAPTER II

### A YOUNG MAN'S CREDO

*Matter is not that mere empty capacity which philosophers have pictured her to be, but the universal mother who brings forth all things as the fruit of her own womb.*

BRUNO

The substance of the last chapter naturally disposes us to enquire whether religion can be reconciled with science. Unfortunately for the efforts of scientifically-inclined religionists, we are compelled to reply that theism and science are irreconcilable, for science is strictly objective and theism is essentially subjective.

The very idea of God seems to be based on a philosophical error—the belief that all effects must have a cause, and that life can only be explained by an Almighty First Cause. But many modern philosophers have rejected the law of Casuality (and substituted Correlation), Bertrand Russell remarking that it is a relic of a bygone age surviving,

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like the monarchy, only because it is erroneously supposed to do no harm. If cause and effect are interdependent on what grounds can we stop at God? Why do we not say that God Himself is the effect of some preceding cause and so *ad infinitum*? It is surely a weak compromise to invest God with wonderful powers created by our own fears and imaginings.

The theory of a first cause and the desire to see something purposive in Nature is, however, very human. It is based on our hope of consolation when the trials of this life are over, a hope which is the result of the perpetual conflict, as Hobhouse says, between Self and Society. But, with science behind us, it is surely easy to alter our mental outlook; easy to accustom ourselves to be indifferent to the vague charms of future reward (a regard for which is enforced by the prospect of eternal torture as an alternative), and to feel quite enough consolation in the fact that no man ever dies. For a man's experiences, his contributions to life, must always live after him; they must become absorbed into the sum Experience of the world. As part of my credo I will discuss this later. The development of the idea of God may now

be briefly considered.

It is easy to picture the evolution of the idea through the superstition of our ancestors. A belief in an Almighty Personal God is not very primitive as we are lazily prone to imagine, for it is preceded by polytheism and polydemonism. We can readily understand how early men, cowering before the grandeur of natural phenomena, saw evil in everything around them. Overcome with fright, their instinctive desire was to placate the devils responsible for these phenomena. So polydemonism arose, and still exists among certain tribes. This form of worship, however, was very unsatisfactory, for natural phenomena continued to manifest themselves in spite of the most ardent appeals and sacrifices to the evil spirits which controlled them. It was a logical step further to invent good forces far more powerful than the heartless demons. So polytheism arose. For, as every natural phenomenon had its own particular demon, so every demon had its own particular master.

But the gods were either no kinder than the demons, or were unable to control their unruly slaves. So, to continue this concept of agencies outside the world, it became neces-

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sary to see some purpose in nature, some reason for apparently destructive natural agencies. Perhaps they were the expressions of an all-powerful Being's wrath. The idea grew. The gods were thrown overboard by advancing humanity. And an almighty, all-wise, all-loving, individual creator was invented, just as the gods and demons had been invented before. Truly did Voltaire say: "Man made God in his own image."

Now we come to a stage where the benevolent deity created by ourselves no longer satisfies our intellect, and hundreds of thousands of us find our religions unsatisfactory, disturbing, and conflicting. So, hampered though we are by traditions and economic considerations, which have become almost inextricably mixed up with the fabric of society, we are passing through an age of agnosticism on the one hand, compensated on the other by a religious revival, prompted by the efforts of a clergy subconsciously alarmed at the prospect of being deprived of a gentlemanly, and not too uncomfortable, means of livelihood. A frank materialism is, however, inevitable.

We have rejected the idea of God. But we know that Hope is essential to existence. What substitute can we provide which will

## A YOUNG MAN'S CREDO

meet the demands of Reason and the need for Hope? I can answer the question best, perhaps, by putting forward the beliefs which have satisfied me, beliefs which thousands of others have deliberately formed for themselves, beliefs which a still larger percentage of humanity is half-consciously assimilating.

This then is my credo: I believe (1) that matter is eternal; (2) that mind is the expression of matter; (3) that it is illogical to seek a First Cause for matter, and worse to invest it with fantastic attributes; (4) that, in view of our limitations, it is much more logical to base a working hypotheses of the origin of life on the potentiality of matter, independent of a directing deity, than to go outside the universe for an explanation; (5) that if I need consolation I have it in the knowledge that by trying to live a clean, useful life, I am directly or indirectly contributing to the sum Experience\* of the world,

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\*I think the developing experience can only be good. For, even if we grant evil as existent, it would only be synonymous with offences against natural morality, which result in the punishment of the offender, and cannot be permanently absorbed. A little reflection will show, for example, that even Nero's influence on posterity has been mainly good, though both his person and his personality have suffered the fate of all such wrongdoers.

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though in an insignificant manner; (6) that I am eternal, for I am but a living bud of this experience, who will again be absorbed in it, who will add to it by my children or my actions; (7) that if I follow my beliefs I will be humble and tolerant, and I will get far more happiness and peace than I could from idle speculations about the delights of heaven or the tortures of hell.

These are the fundamentals of my credo. I do not claim that they are absolute, for nothing is absolute. I do not claim for them either truth or reality, for what is truth and what is reality? I may change them tomorrow. I use them today as a working basis for the conduct of my life; I use them because they seem to me more rational than the theory of a Personal God, for God after all, like most of our other beliefs, is merely a theory. I admit they provide no reason for life, as the idea of God does, but I am interested in life not a 'reason' for life. I believe science will someday prove that the living originated from the non-living, that matter was potentially living even before life had developed. This is a theory today. When the theory becomes a fact even the conceit of men will not enable them to see 'Reason in the Universe'.

## A YOUNG MAN'S CREDO

We know that the most primitive organisms are not so very different from inorganic substances. Indeed, some of the most eminent biologists have mistaken certain inorganic substances for living organisms. The missing link for which science is seeking is not an ape-like vertebrate, but a living drop of plasm devoid of the structural complexities which even the simplest organisms exhibit. Both Huxley and Haeckel once thought they had found such an organism, and there is no reason to suppose that it will never be found, just as there is no reason why such an organism should still persist, even if it ever existed. Be this as it may, recent developments in physics, chemistry and biology have shown how strikingly the inorganic resembles the organic, how bound up the organic is with the inorganic—and the evolution of life from the non-living is undoubtedly a more rational theory than that of creation.

We may now anticipate some arguments against these materialistic theories. The gist of Williams James's *Will to Believe* is that in the final problems of life when confronted with two alternatives, neither of which is capable of proof or otherwise, it is more rational for us to believe what is in accordance with



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our hopes rather than our fears. But we can admit this argument and yet deny a Personal God, for it should be obvious that our materialistic conception of life is just as hopeful as the religious conception. And it is nobler than the hope of individual reward in another world.

If the whole idea of God can be dismissed in so brief an argument as that contained here, why is it that some of our most eminent men and women, many of whom are professional scientists (which does not mean that they are scientific philosophers), still cling to religious dogmas, or at least to a belief in a Personal God? You may say that the answer will be found in the ignorance of my youth. I reply that it will be found in the fact that deeply-rooted beliefs are hard to overcome when one is nearing that End which has necessitated a lifetime of personal repression and spiritual preparation. Moreover, the continuity of cherished beliefs is affected by economic pressure. How many clergymen of advancing years, for instance, could openly preach rationalism without making straight for the workhouse? Why, the very life of a staunch churchman is against his ever attempting appreciatively to study anything contrary to

the dogma he professes.

Can spiritualism be reconciled with materialism? They appear to be opposed; and it may seem that the materialist should dismiss spiritualism as a colossal fabric of lies. Twenty-five years ago spiritualists were derided; a hundred years ago they would have met their end at the stake; but today they are a force to be reckoned with. For, while there is a lot of fraud in spiritualism, there is also a deal of truth. I find myself able, however, to acknowledge the possibility of psychical manifestations without abandoning my present views, for a belief in spiritualism does not necessarily imply a belief in a Personal God. If we believe that we are all part of the sum Experience, returning to it after death and being connected with it during life, it is surely possible to admit that in certain circumstances we can establish personal contact with this Experience through our inherent, but generally undeveloped, powers. A little reflection will show that the argument is not as fantastic as it may seem. We know little of the powers of the human mind, and life has within itself unlimited potentiality.

• An argument which we must now meet is that this Experience is only another name

for God, that materialists must also acknowledge a Force greater than themselves. This must be partially admitted, but the "God" we acknowledge is not the God of the theists. We recognise a higher Force, of which we ourselves are a part, but in seeking its origin we stop at a stage where Reason can take us no further. We stop in the universe; we do not attempt to go beyond it by creating a Being with a Personality; we are not so conceited as to invest this Force with attributes which we alone possess. We will not quibble: call developing matter the sum Experience, the Force, or anything else. Call it God, if you like, but note the difference.

The final defence of the stubborn theist is always this: "I cannot imagine this marvellous universe without a guiding principle, without a creator, without an almighty and loving wisdom behind it. Materialism is so incomprehensible, so devoid of the noble sentiments which have been with man since the earliest times. It gives us nothing to hope for, and if theism is a fallacy then the future is nothing but an awful blackness. A belief in God has been responsible for morality for centuries: it sufficed my forefathers. Why should it not be sufficient for me? Why

## A YOUNG MAN'S CREDO

should I worry about learning a new morality, a new philosophy entirely opposed to the beliefs I gathered at my mother's knees?"

Much of this lament we have already answered. We have shown that an universe independent of an external creator can be imagined, that it does not destroy Hope, though it does destroy the egotistical hope of someday reaping the reward of a virtuous life. The concluding argument scarcely deserves a reply. Life is ever-changing, new knowledge is always being gained. And the man who refuses to keep pace with progress can no longer claim to be a rational being. It is in our nature to keep on striving for perfection, and thus each succeeding generation disregards some of the beliefs and customs of the preceding one, in spite of the opposition of those who have survived from one generation to another.

We no longer find the toga sufficient for our sartorial requirements, or the Roman gods sufficient for our spiritual needs. Why should we then hesitate to relinquish systems which do not meet the demands of increasing reason? Is it because we are afraid of the Unknown, because we have inherited this fear from our ancestors? It would seem so. But

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fortunately a continually increasing section of civilised humanity has overthrown Fear, and has determined with Chaumette "henceforth, to acknowledge no divinity but Reason."

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CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION

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### CHAPTER III

## THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION\*

*People gave ear to an upstart astrologer (Copernicus) who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon . . . . . This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth.*

MARTIN LUTHER

It is generally said that religion has been a great moral force; that it is responsible for the civilisation which has made modern science, and the expression of scientific views, possible. . But is this really so? Has theism really helped the world as much as its dissentient followers would have us believe? We know that Christianity, for instance, has done considerable good, but would the good it has done balance the evils perpetrated (and still perpetrated) by its fanatical followers? Is Christian morality an improvement on



## THE KINGDOM OF EARTH

natural morality, which is after all æons older, as the breasts of female mammals, and all they signify, prove. We may examine these questions here. We must refer mostly to Christianity, but it should be remembered that every other form of theism has had somewhat similar effects.

If we are to take Christianity as a type of the derogatory influence of religion, we must first understand how it developed from a very minor to a very powerful religion. When the mythological religions of Europe broke down, neither the Roman emperors, nor the philosophers of the time, did anything for the infant Christianity. They left it to take its chance, as Draper says, at the hands of ignorant and infuriated ecclesiastics, parasites, eunuchs and slaves. So the new religion soon lost its original simplicity, embodied the main doctrines of the old mythology in itself, and became in fact even more mythological and priest-ridden than the heathenism it despised.

The Christians became powerful in the fourth century, as a result of tyranny and oppression, for it is well known that oppression usually results in victory for the oppressed. The results of his own tyranny caused the Emperor Diocletian to abdicate; and the new

Emperor Constantine saw that he would have to favour Christianity if he wished to keep his throne. For purely political and personal purposes, therefore, Constantine, one of the worst Emperors of Rome, made himself the head of the Christian party. Like Constantine, the aim of all those Romans who joined the new religion was profit and power; like Constantine they were pagans at heart and naturally paganised Christianity. If Christianity was powerful, paganism was by no means subordinate, and to placate both parties Constantine combined the mythology of the one in the worship of the other.

We see this in the fact that the views of the Trinity are based on the old Egyptian legends. The adoration of Isis was restored under a new name, and even her image, standing on the crescent moon, reappeared. The effigies of the goddess with the infant Horus in her arms have evolved into the beautiful creations of the Madonna and Child. But, while ancient mythology was incorporated in the new religion, ancient learning and philosophy were looked at askance. As the Christians grew more powerful they grew more autocratic and intolerant. The wonderful museum of Alexandria, the seat of

ancient learning, was destroyed. The book of Genesis came to be regarded as the sum total of human knowledge, and the fate of Hypatia, who was brutally murdered by Saint Cyril for her philosophical discourses, was a warning to those who hungered after knowledge which had not the sanction of the clergy. The church has exalted Cyril; a modern judge would have had him hanged or electrocuted.

As time went on the Christian Church became more and more intolerant, and went further away from the simple ideals of its founder. We know something of the simplicity of original Christianity through the famous exposition of Tertullian. Fallacies, like the idea of original sin and grace, are not mentioned by Tertullian. These, like many other doctrines, were later developments originated by St. Augustine, who is primarily responsible for promoting the Bible from a guide book of morals to the arbiter of knowledge.

The domineering spirit of the early Christian authorities naturally led to disputes and sectarianism. For instance, Nestor, Bishop of Antioch, disputed the adoration of the Blessed Virgin, and between him and St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, arose a quarrel

resulting in the overthrow of Nestor. But here again the oppressed were the victors. Nestor's followers migrated and set up the Chaldean Church, the Nestorians eventually becoming very powerful. These disputes, eventually filled all western Asia with ferocious sectaries, a state which was naturally inimical to progress.

Shortly after the beginnings of Nestorianism, the Persian King Chosroes went to war with Rome, as a result of the Roman persecution of the Emperor Maurice, who had helped Chosroes in time of need. Chosroes profaned most of the sacred places of Christianity, but no miracles took place, when they were most needed, to avenge the insult of Magianism to Christianity. It was Chosroes' original intention to force the worship of the Sun on the Roman Empire, but he eventually compromised for a thousand talents of gold, a thousand talents of silver, a thousand silk robes, a thousand horses, and last but not least, a thousand virgins. The religion of the spirit was saved by the things of the flesh.

The Persian conquest was but the prelude to the southern revolt against Christianity which resulted in the loss of nearly all her possessions in Asia, Africa and part of Europe.

## THE KINGDOM OF EARTH

In the year 581, there came to Bozrah, on the confines of Syria, a caravan with one Abu Taleb and his nephew, a lad of twelve, by name Halibi or Mohammed, whose uncle was the Guardian of the Caaba, the sacred temple of the Arabs. The caravan was entertained by the Nestorian monks, one of whom taught young Mohammed his own religion. Mohammed grew up to hate idolatry and, being assured of comfortable circumstances, through a happy and wealthy marriage, gave himself up to religion and meditation.

He unfolded his views to his followers, always asserting that he was no more than a public preacher desirous of reforming Christianity. But, as is usually the result of intense devotion to a preacher, a great and powerful religion arose in Mohammedanism. It is now the religion of about one third of the human race, but was originally only a small offshoot of Nestorianism.

All these religious divergences resulted in continuous war, Jerusalem being the prize which most of the parties sought. Eventually, it fell into the hands of the Moslems, and the popes had to content themselves by making Rome the capital of Christendom, basing the change upon a legendary visit of Saint Peter

to Rome. If we jump a few centuries in the history of Christianity, we come to the Inquisition and the Reformation, but we have said enough to show that in the cesspool of intolerance, greed and sectarianism which originated shortly after the death of Christ, Knowledge had little chance of survival. History proves this argument. The seats of ancient learning were destroyed and scholars murdered, and, for more than three-fourths of its existence, the Christian era, therefore, has been remarkable for the paucity of its contributions to knowledge and its ferocity towards progress.

The development of science is comparatively recent, and in the days of Christian power the greed-born intolerance of the priesthood manifested itself in such pleasantries as the burning of Bruno, and the persecution of Roger Bacon, Galileo, Buffon and others. The shameful manner in which Galileo, the father of modern astronomy, was treated in his old age for publishing the results of his researches is too well known to need description. When Buffon tried to state simple truths about the formation of the earth, the Theological Faculty of Sorbonne forced him to publish a recantation ending in the words: "I abandon

everything in my book respecting the formation of the earth and generally all which may be contrary to the narrative of Moses." Roger Bacon, one of the greatest of the early scientists, was persecuted and imprisoned for fourteen years by the Church, headed by the seraphic Doctor and Saint Bonaventura; Bruno was burned at the stake as a heretic, dying as nobly as any Christian martyr, because he taught the plurality of worlds.

In fact, until very recently nearly every great scientist whose contributions to knowledge did not agree with the dogmas of the Church suffered the fate of a martyr or a criminal, and even today the names of scientists like Darwin, Jenner and Stopes cause shudders of pious horror in certain circles. Here is what Monseigneur Seguer says of Darwinism: "These infamous doctrines have for their only support the most abject passion. Their father is pride, their mother impurity, their offspring revolutions. They come from hell and return thither, taking with them the coarse creatures who blush not to proclaim and accept them." He is supported by our old friend Carlyle who regarded Darwin as an 'apostle of dirt worship.' No wonder a historian describes this remark as the result of

'the petulance natural to a dyspeptic eunuch'!

This persecution of science was the obvious result of blind superstition, fanned into flame by far-seeing ecclesiastics, who knew that enlightenment would result in loss of power and profit to themselves. The people were taught to regard scientific pioneers as sorcerers, who desired to interfere with the plan of God and the Absolute Knowledge given by him to the world in the inspired Bible. The *summis desiderantes* of Pope Innocent VIII required the destruction of all witches, sorcerers and other evil beings, few documents having caused the shedding of so much innocent blood. And yet we are asked to believe in the infallibility of the Pope.

By way of digression it may be added that the papal fallibility is strikingly demonstrated by the fact that Buddha was canonised as a Christian saint. In the seventh century, a romance entitled *Barlaam and Josaphat* was composed at the convent of Saint Saba near Jerusalem, in which Josaphat is represented as a Hindu Prince, who was converted to Christianity by Barlaam. In the following century Saint John of Damascus repeated the legend so assiduously that it was soon accepted as true, and eventually found its way into the



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lives of the Saints. In sanctioning a revised list of Saints in 1590, Pope Sixtus V set the seal of Heaven on 'The Holy Saint Josaphat of India, whose wonderful acts Saint John of Damascus has related', and fixed the 27th of November as his feast day. Diego Conto, a Portuguese historian, disputed this decree, and showed that Josaphat and Buddha were the same persons, but the scholars of the time preferred to regard the life of Buddha as a diabolic counterfeit of that of Josaphat. In 1859, Laboulaye in France, Liebrecht in Germany, and other historians, demonstrated that the life of Josaphat was drawn almost literally from an early biography of Buddha, the only changes being that Buddha, instead of becoming a hermit, becomes a Christian, Bodisat being changed into the scriptural name Josaphat. In spite of this evidence, however, Pope Pius IX confirmed in 1873 the decree of his predecessor, the Church of San Giosafat in Palermo being dedicated to the convert saint, while in Antwerp, I believe, his relics are still treasured by the devout!

Is it necessary to dilate farther on this crusade against science, and the manner in which it has affected the course of humanity?

## THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION

For hundreds of years men were forced to exist in the most horrible, insanitary, uncomfortable and priest-ridden manner, with few or none of the amenities which science has bestowed on the world of today. (The 'King's Walk' in Edinburgh and the Ford colony in Detroit provide interesting comparisons, particularly for those generally genial asses who are pleased to call themselves supporters of the 'old order'.) And through this theological odium against science, we are only today making discoveries which may have been discovered by those great intellects of the Middle Ages. Instead of being a healthy, growing infant, science today would have been already mature. And she would have conferred on the people of our time the incalculable benefits of her maturity. Even the infant science has shown humanity an outlook and a system which no religion could ever do.

Yet science has not only suffered at the hands of Christianity, but of most other religions as well. For instance, when Amrou, a Lieutenant of the Caliph Omar, conquered Egypt, he formed a friendship in Alexandria with John, otherwise known as Philoponus, the Book-lover. The Greek asked his Saracen

friend for the remnants of the great Alexandrian Library, and Amrou communicated the request to the Caliph. "If," replied that worthy, "the books agree with the Koran, the word of God, they are useless and need not be preserved; if they disagree with it, they are pernicious. Let them be destroyed." We are told that the remnants of this much sacked seat of learning were distributed among the baths of Alexandria, and that six months were barely sufficient to consume them. The burning of libraries seems to have been a favourite diversion for religious fanatics. To mention only a few examples, the Crusaders burnt the great Library of Tripoli, the Spaniards burnt vast piles of American picture-writings, and the treacherous Cardinal Ximenes delivered to the flames eighty thousand Arabic manuscripts of untold value.

Need we say more? Need we enlarge on the injurious influence of religion on knowledge? Need we go beyond Christianity and Mohammedanism to other great religions, such as those of the Jews or the Hindus, to describe the intolerance of any form of theism towards all knowledge which has not the sanction of its sacred books? We need not. For we have said enough to indicate the direct

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injury done by religion to knowledge. The equally great injury religion has indirectly done, and is still doing, will be obvious in later chapters. •



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CHAPTER IV

RELIGION AND MODERN LIFE

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## CHAPTER IV

### RELIGION AND MODERN LIFE

*He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.*

COLERIDGE

*Major est Scripturae auctoritas quam omnis humani ingenii capacitas.*

ST. AUGUSTINE

We are said to be living in an age of religious tolerance. Can it be asserted, therefore, that religion is still a bar to progress? It can. For, in spite of the waning influence of the Christian Church in Europe, or of autocratic Hinduism in India, the majority of men are still sectarian theists, with all the blind arrogance which their respective dogmas have inculcated. I am convinced that among the masses religious intolerance is almost as much alive today as ever it was, that half-educated theists are as much opposed to



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any knowledge, which may lead to rational beliefs, as their progenitors were in the Middle Ages, that the mutual hatred of the 'Puritan and the Catholic is essentially no less intense than it was in the days of Cromwell.

In the West ardent church-going and strict adherence to sectarian rituals may be on the decline, but this is due more to a vague sense of dissatisfaction or sheer indolence than to studied convictions. Knowing this the Churches are doing everything in their power to tempt back the straying sheep and to restrict the spread of rationalism, even to providing 'dancing, radio programmes, cinema shows, pool, cards and meetings of all kinds', and to advertising as follows: "Solomon a six-cylinder sport. Could you handle as many wives and concubines as this old Bird? Rev. B. J. Hodge will proceed on the subject Sunday night at Seattle Memorial. You are welcome."

In these campaigns they are at heart as relentless as ever they were. It is true they can no longer burn scientists at the stake, but they do not rely only on blandishments and eloquent appeals to their followers; they support their efforts by deliberately excluding a liberal education

from their schools, and by a subtle censorship of Knowledge almost praiseworthy in its efficiency. That this is so, that the masses are still swayed by symbolism rather than logic, was strikingly proved by the notorious 'Monkey Trial' at Dayton, Tennessee, which came as a blow to those who believed that major humanity in this twentieth century was radically different from its medieval ancestors.

We are, therefore, compelled to face the fact that the declining influence of dogma is still influential enough, whether it be in Europe, Asia or the Antipodes, to retard universal progress. Consequently it may be interesting to consider some of the ancient and fantastic beliefs which still exist, and the effects of their existence on modern life. As before we need refer only to Christian beliefs.

We will begin with the attributes of God, to begin, as it were, at the beginning. The three R's of education have their parallel in the three O's of Christianity: Omnipotence, Omniscience and Omnipresence. An unalterable faith in the three O's is the foundation of this religion, yet its most eminent divines are unable to explain them without becoming involved in unending paradox. I once heard a Bishop of the Church of England, who was

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being heckled at an open-air meeting in London (where the representatives of four different Christian Churches were trying to out-shout each other in a manner which would have excited the envy of the booth owners of Mitcham Fair), say that he could not explain why God should create a man when He knew that eternal punishment awaited that man at the end of his mortal career. This, the good Bishop rebukingly remarked, was one of those great mysteries known to God alone which we wretched mortals should not require to understand.

Then somebody asked if such men as Judas Iscariot, to whom Christianity owes its existence almost as much as it does to Christ, are merely pawns in a Divine Game. Faced with a poser, his Lordship replied that, in the case of Judas, Christ did everything He could to prevent His disciple from betraying Him, but he forgot that this in itself implies limitations in the Almighty power. Can we possibly believe that an all-wise, all-powerful, all-merciful King would create a man to go to his doom, that having created the world he would deliberately limit His power to allow it to follow its erratic course, instead of conducting His Kingdom as any mortal King,

who cared for his reputation, would do? Can we possibly say that Man has a free will when his whole being is subject to God's will, a God who knows His children's destiny even before they are born? Surely it is obvious that the ideas of reward and punishment are entirely of this earth, that when men applied them to God they did not know enough to realise the folly of doing so when dealing with an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being—an error they have been trying to explain away ever since.

I do not care if Mr. Chesterton writes a thousand pages of orthodoxical paradox, or if the Pope curses me as malignantly as the Jews cursed Spinoza, or if all the Bishops in Christendom tell me that I am a wretched, fallible mortal foolishly questioning revealed truths, but I shall never believe what neither the Fat Boy of Fleet Street nor his spiritual father can explain. For, even if my puny intelligence is limited, why should I be asked to believe what I cannot comprehend, why should I be troubled with something which no human mind can grasp? I am told to have Faith. Faith in what? Faith in the perturbed speculations of the ecclesiastical mind, a lazy faith which exalts superstition and shuns the

austerity of reason.

We come now to the minor mysteries of Godly attributes, such as those of the Holy Trinity and the birth of God the Son as Man. The most elementary historical knowledge proves that the Holy Trinity is mere symbolism, that the idea existed in older religions, yet we are asked to believe it as revealed truth. We are asked to believe that God took the form of a man, that a Being incapable of suffering, suffered to rescue the unrescuable results of His own creation, when all worldly troubles could have been adjusted by a wave of the Omnipotent wand.

The infallibility of the Bible has been the subject of universal discussion in recent years, some far-seeing ecclesiastics attempting to reconcile evolution with Genesis, others declaring that the Bible can no longer be regarded as an infallible work, while others again are convinced that science is wrong and the Bible right. The supporters of this last belief generally claim to be educated men, yet surely an ordinary knowledge of comparative history and mythology would have shown them that the Bible is largely a collection of oriental myths.

We need not do more than take the legend

of the Tower of Babel as an example. It was adopted from the Chaldeans by the Jews, and similar explanations for the diversity of language exist among other nations, such as the Hindu legend of the World-tree or Tree of Knowledge. The story has it that this proud tree desired to gather all men together under its shadow and to lift its branches to heaven, an ambition which so annoyed Brahma that he punished it by cutting off its branches. They sprang up again, however, as *wata* trees making 'differences of belief and speech and customs to prevail on the earth, to disperse men upon its surface.'

Need we go further to prove our argument? Need we point out the similarity between the sayings of Lao-Tse and Christ? Need we remark that like Christ, Horus and Krishna were both born of virgins, that the Virgin and Son have their counterpart in the Egyptian Isis and Horus? It would be considered superfluous to do so, but though the sources on which the Bible has drawn are as plain as daylight, Christian belief in its revealed authenticity is so firm that comparatively recently an eminent scholar calculated that the entire creation was instantaneous, and that 'this work took place and man was created by the Trinity

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on October 23, 4004 B.C., at nine o'clock in the morning.' How the first earthly hour was nine must remain one of the minor mysteries, while the fact that the lamp of Eastern culture was already alight at this time is of relative unimportance.

And if we want further evidence of the spiritual authorship of the Bible a famous preacher provides it. "Mortal man (he says) never wrote the Bible. A good man could not have written the Bible, and a bad man would not have written it if he could. A good man could not have written it because the Bible tells us 2,008 times that God himself is the author; therefore, if man wrote the Bible he is a greater liar, and, therefore, was not a good man. And a bad man would not have written the Bible if he could, because it tells him what he is, and that is the thing he isn't wanting to believe, because if he did he could not sleep at nights as long as he remained unsaved and unrepentant". Less remarkable as an example of Christian logic is the statement of sundry defenders of the faith that the Bible, as the word of God, has stood 'the test of centuries'. In spite of diligent enquiry, however, I have failed to discover the test it has stood.

The effects on knowledge of this blind

adherence to the teachings of the Scriptures can well be imagined. Of the sciences, astronomy and geography suffered perhaps more than any other. For, how could the earth be round when a great Cardinal had said: "animals which move have limbs and muscles; the earth has no limbs or muscles, therefore it does not move. It is angels\* who make Saturn, Jupiter, the Sun, etc., turn round. If the earth revolves it also must have an angel in the centre to set it in motion; but only devils live there; it would therefore be a devil who would impart motion to the earth . . . . . " And it is obviously impossible for us to be living in a satanically impelled globe! Moreover, had not Saint Paul said to the Romans: "Their sound went into *all* the earth, and their words into the ends of the earth." How could the world be round if it had 'ends', how could the opposite side of the earth be inhabited when no such inhabitants had been recorded by Scripture among the descendants of Adam and the word of God was not known there? Above all how could the world be spherical,

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\*Angels, by the way, are a biological impossibility. In *The Science of Life* it is truly pointed out that for an angel to be able to fly he would have to have a breast bone and muscles sticking out four feet from his chest!



since on 'the day of judgment, men on the other side of the globe could not see the Lord descending through the air.' Strangely enough missionary zeal was partly responsible for correcting Christian geography. Father Joseph Acosta, for instance, writes: "Whatsoever Lactantius saith, we that live now at Peru, and inhabite that parte of the worlde which is opposite to Asia and the Antipodes, find not our selves to bee hanging in the aire, our heades downward and our feete on high."

You will say that these beliefs are of the Middle Ages, but in every one of the countries in which I have lived I have met comparatively literate people who still believe in the Scriptural description of the earth. And White, the great historian of the conflict between Christianity and science, relates that, towards the end of the last century, a president of a Lutheran teachers' seminary wrote: "... the wise and truthful God has expressed himself on this matter in the Bible. The entire Holy Scripture settles the question that the earth is the principal body of the Universe, and that it stands fixed, and that the sun and moon only serve to light it." After criticising astronomers from Copernicus to his own day, he continues with apparent humi-

lity: "Let no man understand me as enquiring where truth is to be found—in the Bible or with the Astronomers. No: I know that beforehand—that my God never lies, never makes a mistake; out of His mouth comes only truth, when He speaks of the structure of the Universe, of the earth, sun, moon and stars." It is a strange fact that though God never makes a mistake we are told in Leviticus XI. 21, 22 that locusts, beetles and grasshoppers have *four* legs, whereas most schoolboys know that all insects have six legs.

In their control of philology the clerics have been even more successful than they were with geography and astronomy, for until the time of Sir William Jones (the founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal) Hebrew was universally regarded in the West as 'that Mother tongue, from which all others are but distant and debilitated progenies.' And, even today, thousands of people may be found who still regard Hebrew as the first language, who have either never heard of Sanskrit and Sanskrit philosophy, or regard the teachings of the Hindus and the claims of Sanskrit as damnable heresies.

The progress of medicine has suffered as much at the hands of religion as any other

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branch of knowledge. And how could it be otherwise when superstitions about 'demoniacal possession were (and are still) rampant, when uncleanness was looked upon with pride as a sign of saintliness? (We are told that it was taken as a sign of consecrated grace in the 'holy blissful martir' of Canterbury that the hair garments he wore next his skin were found to be seething with lice 'like a boiling cauldron', and we have also been assured that when certain Eastern monks attempted to wash themselves the Almighty showed his displeasure by drying up the stream which supplied the bath!) Many people still believe that women have one rib less than men, many still believe (witness the press) that inoculation, vaccination and contraception are interferences with the Divine Plan, that medical relief at childbirth is heretical (for has not the Bible ordered that women must bear in pain?).

In 1591, Eufame Macalyane was burned alive at Edinburgh for calling in a physician at the birth of her two children, and only the other day I heard that a pious Christian had whipped his wife soundly for taking advantage of Twilight Sleep during her delivery, when he was away from the home. I related

the story to an old Roman Catholic lady. She replied that if the whipping was not unduly severe it was deserved, for no woman should attempt to resist the Supreme Curse, and that the Good Book itself advocated castigation as a punishment for disobedient wives (she was, of course, an old maid!).

We turn now to those broad-minded Christians who believe that science does not contradict the Bible, that the whale is quite large enough to permit a man to live within it for three days, that evolution and Genesis do not conflict, as the days of Genesis were periods of time of unknown duration—an unhappy excuse for they had 'a morning and an evening'. By their pseudo-liberality this section of the Christian apologists are doing as much harm as their more fanatical brethren, but we will dismiss them with a single quotation from Canon Driver: "The geological record contains no evidence of clearly defined periods corresponding to the 'days' of Genesis. In Genesis, vegetation is complete two days before animal life appears. Geology shows us that they occur simultaneously even if animal life did not appear first. In Genesis, birds appear together with aquatic creatures, and precede all land

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animals; according to the evidence of geology, birds are unknown till a period much later than that at which aquatic creatures (including fishes and amphibia) abound, and they are preceded by numerous species of land animals, in particular by insects. . . . .”

We need go no further. Every rational being must surely believe that the Bible represents a stage in religious evolution, that it was not written at the dictation of God, but is merely a wonderful collection of legends and sermons calculated (often erroneously) to guide moral conduct. Regarded in this way the Bible is a great book, a book which should have, with other great books, a place in every home; regarded as Saint Augustine regarded it, it has done, and will continue to do, incalculable harm. The missionaries, whose chief pride is the conversion of heathen through biblical teaching and the distribution of thousands of vernacular Bibles, are little better than thieves, though they know it not. They are robbing non-Christians of their heritage; every year they are robbing their own countrymen, those thousands of the present unemployed, those thousands of baggard slum-children, of millions of pounds at a time of the gravest economic stress.

It is the duty, therefore, of every man and woman who realises the evils of dogmatic religions to fight them as they would fight their bitterest enemies. It is their duty• because we are living in a world of turbid feeling where, as Hobhouse says, Reason is a strange, and often an unwelcome, guest. Men love to think symbolically, to delude themselves into believing that symbolism is truth. Superstitions are stubborn, as the persistence of the beliefs of our simple-minded ancestors proves. But these beliefs can be eradicated: and they must be eradicated if humanity is to progress. For they affect us individually; they affect society as a whole; they affect everything. They engender hatred and intolerance; they attach an unnatural importance to natural events; they are among the causes of economic instability and political follies. Above all they are responsible for the absence, of proper education among the masses, for it is no exaggeration to say that nearly every school in the world is controlled by the followers of this or that religion. In these schools the old legends are handed down from generation to generation as indisputable truths, and Reason knocks at their doors in vain.



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**CHAPTER V**  
**MIRACLES**

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## CHAPTER V

### MIRACLES

*And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea: "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*

ST. MARK

*A miracle is a makeshift, a way out, something which has to make up for a want in the order of nature.*

HOFFDING

Man's love of mysticism and his fear of the unknown is nowhere so well exemplified as in his belief in miracles—a belief which in some respects is almost as strong today as it was at the dawn of history. And few human weaknesses have been more exploited by the unscrupulous. Not to be outdone by the fertility of the Apostolic imaginations, successive generations of their followers have added to the comprehensive collection of miracles in the Gospels, and this delightful pastime is still so common among holy men (and knaves) that the critic

is dismayed at the 'wealth of evidence' before him.

A good example of a modern miracle-worker, in whose efficacy no Catholic may disbelieve, is afforded by Saint Francis Xavier, that hard-working missionary who never claimed for himself, and whose early biographers did not claim for him, any supernatural powers. His divine gift of tongues which enabled him, without any previous experience, to 'speak all languages fully, flowingly and elegantly' is denied by the Saint's own letters, in which he bewails his difficulties in learning languages, particularly Japanese. But, in spite of this, his foolish admirers continue to belittle his efforts, adding, by way of completing the legend, that when he addressed peoples of different nationalities together each heard the sermon in his own particular tongue.

Perhaps the most familiar of his miracles is that of the returned crucifix. 'The story goes that during one of his voyages Saint Francis lost his crucifix—some say he threw it overboard to calm a troubled sea—which was restored to him by a pious crab, or, as I was taught in school, by a no less religious fish, which jumped out of the sea with the crucifix and landing in the boat of the

bereaved Saint returned it to him. The ungrateful priest, however, has never recorded his indebtedness to that exemplary inhabitant of the Deep.

The evolution of another of his miracles may be considered. Writing in 1594, one of his biographers mentions that during a voyage from Goa to Malacca, Xavier went ashore on a certain island, where he was afterwards found in deep meditation and prayer. A century later this simple incident had become a miracle, Father Bouhours saying: "The servants found the man of God raised from the ground into the air, his eyes fixed upon heaven, and rays of light about his countenance." This passage is undoubtedly very satisfactory to those who aspire to holiness, but others must wonder why the Creator should cause an abeyance of the laws of gravity as a sign of his appreciation of devotion.

The provoked seeker after Holy favours will now ask if the miracle of the exceptionally good (but by no means perfect) preservation of St. Francis Xavier's body at Goa can also be explained. Personally, I cannot explain it, but I do know that, unusual as such cases are, their occurrence has been known for centuries, even among pagans with no claims on

## MIRACLES

Divine favour. The most famous example is perhaps that afforded by Julia, the beautiful daughter of Claudius, over whose body, which was exhumed in Rome in 1485, the scholars of the period raved, describing her as having the 'bloom of youth still upon her cheeks', and exhaling a 'sweet odour'. These effusions so perturbed Pope Innocent VIII that he had her body secretly reburied at night, for it would have been scandalous for his subjects to know that God had so far forgotten himself as to accord a favour to a Roman maiden which the Church had arrogated to the most holy of its members.

So vain is craven humanity that it will seek Divine intercession for the most trivial events. And that Beneficent Being has always been ready to oblige (though from more serious problems He has held Himself studiously aloof). Church History proves it! For instance, when Saint Bernard was aggravated by a cloud of flies in the middle of a sermon he merely repeated the sacred formula of excommunication, and 'the flies fell down dead in heaps and were removed with shovels.' So efficacious is this magic formula, that in 1731 the municipality of Thoron entered in its minutes: "Resolved, that this town join with

other parishes of this province in obtaining from Rome an excommunication against the insects, and that it will contribute *pro rata* to the expenses of the same." It would be unfair on living Catholics if the usefulness of this formula were to cease in this twentieth century. So the Almighty still permits his priests to employ it ( for a small consideration) in countless Christian homes, where its power, however, is now usually restricted to the duller work of exorcising the inhabitants of the abysmal regions.

The Monarch who rules the world is so considerate that He not only works miracles for individuals, but alters the very configuration of the heavens to warn His subjects of some impending event. When I was a boy, I well remember the consternation caused by the appearance of Halley's comet: the end of the world, or at least the death of a mighty sovereign, was regarded as certain. This idea has alarmed mankind through the centuries, and is mentioned in very early history and literature. Thus, in the *Iliad* the helmet of Achilles is described as shining

- Like the red star, that from his flaming hair  
Shakes down diseases, pestilence and war.

And in the *Annals* of Tacitus it is written that "whilst these things were occurring a star comet shined forth, of which comet it is the common notion that it portends a change in the monarchy," an idea which is continued in English literature, especially by Shakespeare and Milton.

Alas, how little does man read? How firmly is blind fear entrenched in human breasts? For, over two hundred years ago, certain scholars (denounced, perhaps, as heretics) proved the fallacy of connecting comets with misfortune, most caustic among them being Pierre Bayle, who wrote: "The more we study man, the more does it appear that pride is his ruling passion, and that he affects grandeur even in his misery. Mean and perishable creature that he is, he has been able to persuade men that he cannot die without disturbing the whole course of Nature and obliging the heavens to put themselves to fresh expense in order to light his funeral pomp."

This belief in the miraculous is so innate that in illness medical aid is often regarded as inferior to prayers for Divine intercession (in India the press earns thousands of rupees every year by publishing—next to the divorce

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announcements—the acknowledgements of those grateful souls who have been cured by vows and prayers). So innumerable individuals meet a premature death, or suffer intolerable agonies, because they had more faith in the benevolent mediation of this or that saint than in the nasty medicines of mortal Dr. Smith. By these incurable fanatics diseases are regarded as heaven-sent curses, which are naturally more readily cured by atonement than by scientific aid.

It is easy to understand how the idea gains ground among the faithful. Mrs. Jones's husband has been out of employment for six months and she is sorely distressed. Then one day she runs across Mrs. James who tells her that her little boy Jimmy had a racking cough for months—'doctors failed, my dear'—but poor Jimmy was eventually cured by Holy Saint Anthony to whom she had promised ten rupees and a dozen candles if he put Jimmy right, 'and look at dear Jimmy today, such a fine healthy boy.' Distracted Mrs. Jones, willing to try anything that will relieve the family troubles, steps into the nearest Church on her way home and offers half her husband's wages for the first month to Saint Anthony if he will procure a job for her man.



Two months later the unfortunate victim of national mismanagement strikes a situation, through sheer hard trying and ceaseless tramping, and his overwrought wife immediately attributes it to the intercession of the saint, just as Mrs. James attributed to him the cure which months of underpaid medical advice, incompletely followed by her, had accomplished. And so the priests wax fat (they are notoriously fat) on the proceeds derived from human ignorance.

This belief in the benevolence of patron saints is simply rampant among Roman Catholics and certain groups of Protestants. And in the tropics converted natives will not only seek the aid of the saints of their new creed, but make assurance doubly sure by offering surreptitious sacrifices to the divinities they are supposed to have discarded. The clergy, quick to take advantage of such failings, turn them into still greater account by advertising the efficacy of pilgrimages to holy shrines (for sometimes an ordinary saint is too busy to take up a brief for a few rupees), and by the sale of fetishes and charms. I have often wondered at the number of *genuine* pieces of the Cross of Calvary which are extant today, and the millions of scapulars made

from pieces of the wardrobe of the Mother of Christ. The skeletons of saints are no less elastic, and have increased the financial stability of countless Churches. The fact that the bones of Saint Ursula and her eleven thousand martyrs, in the Church at Cologne which bears her name, are declared by anatomists to be the bones of *men*; or that the relics of Saint Rosalie at Palermo, which have been so efficacious in curing diseases and granting requests, have been proved by one of the most religious of osteologists to be the bones of a goat, are just scientific heresies to the devout Christian.

It is apparent, even to a heretic, that the complete body of a saint must be endowed with more power than a mere rib, that the shrines of the holiest must be productive of better results than of those who occupy a lower plane in the Kingdom of Heaven (where all men are, nevertheless, equal). Thus, it follows that pilgrimages to Lourdes or to Goa have cured more afflicted sinners than most of the other shrines approved by the Doctors of the Church. Yet these cures do not average fifty per cent of the pilgrims who offer their homage and their money, while similar results have been obtained from the pagan shrines of

the Greeks, and are still obtained from the holy places of the Hindus. We are told that the unfortunate majority were not devout enough, which means, in part, that they did not pay enough; but the blunt materialist suggests that the minority who are cured are fervid enough to be cured by auto-suggestion.

We have had so many epidemics of faith-healing recently that we may be excused if we examine the claims of the faith-healers more closely. Some of their cures have been apparently marvellous, and have been widely advertised by the sensational press. Yet not one of the diseases which have been cured can be proved to be of organic origin; they are obviously the results of certain nervous conditions, which often produce effects similar to organic diseases. Even the blind man who was cured by a Christian Scientist a few years ago (the case created wide-spread comment and argument), was known by a leading nerve specialist to be suffering from an acute form of shell-shock, which had resulted in temporary blindness. This little detail, however, was never considered by the crowd who saw the ex-soldier stand up before them and dramatically exclaim: "I was totally blind. But through Christian Science I can now see as

well as anybody. Glory be to God! Halleluia!"

Such cures have often been duplicated by specialists in nervous diseases. Let us take an example from a text-book on the subject. A woman who had been bed-ridden for more than seventeen years with paralysis of the lower limbs, eventually came under the treatment of a famous surgeon who, having diagnosed the nervous origin of her condition, put her under the influence of ether as part of his pretence of carrying out a simple operation, which he assured her would result in a complete cure. The bluff was so successful that when she recovered her senses she walked with the assistance of the attendants, from the operating table to her bed, and after a few days of massage and nourishing food was completely cured.

It may be safely asserted that if this woman had been cured by a Christian Scientist, the newsmongers would have hailed it as the miracle of their age, while the woman would have become a confirmed follower of her spiritual doctor. In this way does Christian Science spread. The tolerant scientist may feel inclined to admit that the faith-healers are doing useful work (the intolerant will

claim that the curing of imbeciles is not useful), but it must be recognised that it is based on the deception of the ignorant by the ignorant (for I have no doubt that most faith-healers feel they are divinely inspired), and that much more could be accomplished by giving publicity to the subtleties of the nervous system, than by wrapping explainable effects in a halo of mysticism.

We may here anticipate an obvious criticism. Can the curative miracles of Christ be explained along the lines suggested by Mons. Coué? The reply is emphatically in the positive, for Christ had the same advantages of publicity and crowd psychology which the modern faith-healer experiences. And, even the Gospels record no case of a man who had a definitely organic disease cured, most of the cases being like that of the man sick with a palsy—an obviously nervous complaint. Of course, there were the miracles of raising the dead to life, but these were not strictly speaking curative miracles. It may be mentioned, however, that they can be explained in the light of our present knowledge of suspended animation (it would be churlish to suggest that the simple-minded Apostles were not ideal historians), and that they have their

parallel in the many cases of people who, though certified as dead, have come back to life to the secret annoyance of those who would have benefited by their wills.

The religious critic will now sneeringly ask if science can also explain all the other miracles of the New Testament. We must admit that it cannot, that if certain miracles were really performed they can only be attributed to supernatural power. But were they really performed, or were they merely born of the overwrought imaginations of a few simple folk who, like simple people of our own time, were given to unfounded gossip, exaggeration and mysticism? We need not discuss all these miracles. It will suffice to refer to the miracle of miracles, the miracle of the Ascension, on which the very foundations of Christianity rest, and of which Saint Paul said: "If Christ be not risen, then is our teaching vain."

In his *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, Laing has studied the problem in great detail, and I need only say that there is not the slightest scrap of historical evidence to authenticate it. Would the evidence of the four evangelists, whose writings cannot be satisfactorily accounted for, and of Saint Paul

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(the only one of the five who can be regarded as a historical personage), who himself says that he only knew of the Ascension by hearsay, be 'accepted in any court of law today? It would not. If any Christian scholar can really establish this miracle on sound historical evidence, my early faith in the Christian religion and its miracles would be restored. And I would devote the rest of my life to evangelical labours.

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CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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CHAPTER VI  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

*But now just brown old Earth is good  
enough for me;  
Forget your Heaven, and Hell and vague  
Eternity!  
And all your vain conjecturings about  
the rest,  
And lie contentedly awhile with me on  
Nature's breast!*

LILY S. ANDERSON

*Faith is when you believe something that  
you know ain't true.*

SCHOOLBOY HOWLER

It is no exaggeration to say that religious instruction occupies at least one-fifth of the time in Christian schools, and probably more in the schools of other denominations. Moreover, religious opinions directly affect the entire curriculum—for the worse. Looking back on my own school-days, I find that history was for me a tangled mixture of legends and dates; Latin, a jingo of declensions and

verbs to be; English, the learning by rote of Nesfield's rules and carefully censored Shakespearean texts; Geography, a collection of antiquated statistics about the principal cities of the British Empire and such interesting details as the names of the capes on the West Coast of England; and Science, a mass of dismally presented facts about the movements and topography of the earth, with dissertations on the difference between solution and suspension, or the properties of gases, thrown in by way of diversion.

Mathematics was the teacher's favourite subject. He rested while we grappled with columns of meaningless figures, or tried to decide the exact moment at which two trains, started in opposite directions on the same line (by the careless officials of a company which no country would tolerate), would collide. In the other problems which were set to make us 'think for ourselves', oranges and apples played an important part, presumably on the presumption that a juicy fruit will always secure a small boy's attention. Indeed, oranges and trains affect our school economy so considerably, that the ideal occupation for most men, apart from the cloth, would be that of a fruiterer or

a railway man.

There was no central theme in our so-called education, because any attempt to make us think connectedly would have been derogatory to the faith of our fathers and the economic safety of our teachers. So we were taught the three R's and a few other subjects to enable us to pass the necessary examinations, and the authorities to collect their fees. We learned things without seeing any reason for the learning; we learned facts without realising what part they would play in our future lives; everything was disjointed, scrappy, and incredibly dull. Even religion was taught without impressing on us any 'great spiritual truths'; it was just another subject in which deficiency resulted in the warming of one or the other part (according to the fancy, or degree of sadism, of our teachers) of our already over-warmed anatomies.

The Bible was never taught to us, but throughout our school-days we studied larger and larger editions of Bible history, that impossible *réchauffé* of the more fantastic legends of the Old Testament, leavened with the parables of the New. We learned by heart the four gospels, innumerable prayers

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covering every stage of our spiritual and physical needs, and the catechism, which was our *vade mecum*. Weary of ceaseless repetition, the more ambitious among us would learn the *Credo* backwards and, having completed this praiseworthy feat, would look down with pious contempt on children of lesser accomplishment.

We would rise at an infernally early hour in the morning, mumble the Lord's Prayer and a few others, and then, having incompletely attended to our toilet, would dash off to chapel. To impress our teachers with our spirituality we would vie with each other in the performance of self-imposed religious tasks, and once every year went into retreat for a week to purge our souls of every possible trace of impurity through meditation and prayer, helped on by frequent sermons, which either put us into a state of pious ecstasy or abject fright. At this time we would eat frugally, speak little, cuff recalcitrant small boys who *would* steal away into corners to play marbles, and parade about with a well-assumed air of humble piety, which we knew would earn increased favours from our observant superiors in the coming year.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Thus was our early education marred by religious intolerance towards real knowledge, and we learned to estimate piety in terms of hypocrisy and superstition. It is not surprising, therefore, that a few months after we left school we were as profoundly ignorant of the real things of life as a South Sea Cannibal—and we were far more dangerous to society. For, the only thing the average man does not, indeed cannot, forget is the religious exercises which have been dunned into him from the day he passed from the stage of crying for what he wanted to asking for it.

His religion persists, but pathetically, for man is soon consumed with desire: desire for sexual pleasures, advancement, and worldly possessions. He lives in an almost perpetual state of repentance; he sins and he repents, he repents and he sins. Can it be otherwise when morals are based not on scientific facts and the true needs of society, but on the risk of displeasing the Creator? And so most men live in a state of constant conflict with themselves; of constant suppression and constant failure; of constant sin and constant fear of its spiritual consequences; of constant attempts to reconcile

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human desires with religious beliefs. The result is inevitable: a frank Hedonism, a fanatical spirituality, or perpetual hypocrisy. This is what is accomplished by years of religious education. Indeed, one wonders if at any stage in the lives of men it is a real moral force, for even in our best schools private vices, foul language and lying are almost universal.

Unfortunately, religious education is not confined to school, but is supplemented by parental influence in every God-fearing home. This influence is typified in Mrs. Armel O'Connor's *Mary Meadow* series or the *Little Flower Monthly*. Mrs. O'Connor advises parents to use the Crucifix as an 'infallible remedy for grediness', but I imagine more permanent results would be obtained from imparting a little elementary physiological knowledge, though it is easier for a parent to brandish a crucifix than to learn physiology.

Then again the dear lady suggests to the mother that for "correcting faults, for overcoming hereditary difficulties and troubles, prayer is their one weapon, their sole remedy—prayer while the child sleeps and the world is still." From what we know of auto-suggestion, the value of prayer to ignorant parents

may be conceded, but who can estimate the harm done to her children by the virtuously optimistic mother who prays for heavenly intercession, instead of endeavouring to teach them practical rules for the conduct of life?

These emotional effusions may sound very beautiful, but we have abundant evidence of their futility. (The proved fact that the majority of men the world over are suffering from venereal disease is but a small part of this evidence.) It is, therefore, poetical, but unpractical, to advise the young boy to become 'a soldier of Christ', the adolescent girl to fit herself "to be numbered among those stately, stainless lilies in the garden of the Beloved, lilies whose only aim is to delight their King with their beauty and their sweetness." What is the value of such advice? One feels that its only value is to the student of the subtleties of sexual psychology, for the last passage must be regarded, even by an atheist, as too reminiscent of a Sultan and his harem to be a compliment to God.

How can humanity formulate a sane, logical code of morals, how can the fundamental facts of life be made universal, when such unmitigated nonsense pervades the entire being of youth? Even if we grant theism as



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a theory as rational as materialism, religious education is a colossal farce, inimical to that pure and comprehensible theism which some of our greatest men profess. From the materialist's viewpoint, dogmatic teaching is injurious in that it leads to a heart-rendering antipathy to demonstrable knowledge; from the theist's viewpoint, it is harmful in that it often results in open disbelief or disgusting hypocrisy. In the serious student of Life, disbelief is correlated with the formation of a better moral code, but in those in whom it is produced merely by a sheer surfeit of dogma it generally leads to a gross irresponsibility towards humanity and self—and in one way or the other most men are surfeited with dogma. We are told that the Great War caused a decline in religious faith, an increase in loose living. Could we expect otherwise from men who suddenly found the edifice on which they stood in ruins around them, and themselves devoid of almost everything which they had previously held worthwhile, men who had no training whatever in the methods of objective enquiry.

The main remedy for the defects in our educational system, which is after all synonymous with our social system, should be obvious,

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but the terror of the clergy must retard its application. Yet, it is perhaps not too optimistic to hope that the new century will see a new education—a wide education which will result in a sounder definition of social relations, a tolerant education which will permit men to choose without conflict between God and the Universe as *their* reason dictates.



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CHAPTER VII  
EDUCATION: TODAY AND  
TOMORROW

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CHAPTER VII

EDUCATION: TODAY AND  
TOMORROW

*We by no means wish to see our children mere automatons, ready to act in whatever way they are urged at the moment, but we wish to give them a right principle of action, and to see them hereafter do what is good and resist what is evil, not from the fear of punishment or the hope of reward . . . . .*

An entry in the diary of LORD AVEBURY'S mother.

Not so long ago I paid a visit to my old school. After showing me the latest developments, the Principal took me on a tour of the classrooms. Here I listened, in an attitude of appropriate admiration, to seventy lusty youngsters singing 'two and two make four', saw the unfortunate class next door feverishly biting their pencils in an attempt to add up a black-board full of fractions within the stipulated period, commented on the mental agility of the Bright Boy in another, who

proudly recited the Duke of Bedford's lamentation on the death of the hero of Agincourt—and so on through the ten classes of the school.

In one form only was the even tenor of the exhibition disturbed. A small crowd of eager boys was gathered round the board, intent on their young master's explanation of the following curious symbols:

2 3 6 4 9 0

I was intrigued, but the Principal seemed annoyed and hurried me away. As we went along the corridor he mused: "I really don't know what to do with Mr. Smith. Fancy teaching the theory of numbers when his class does not even know its G.C.M. properly. And the examinations next month! I would be sorry to loose him. He is so very keen and has done wonderful work in the new Science Hall. But the theory of numbers, or descriptions of prehistoric monsters, will not teach our boys to earn their bread. It's the exams which are the important thing. Mr. Smith must follow the curriculum or I shall have to ask him to leave. Hi, Thomas (to a passing boy), ask Mr. Smith to come to my office at 12 o'clock."

Going home that day I reflected on my own school days. How similar was Today to Yesterday, I thought. The same ancient teaching, the same dull curriculum, the same lack of broad-mindedness. But there was a slight difference. In the person of poor Mr. Smith, Tomorrow had already crept into this carefully guarded school. It would be restrained, hounded, but it would grow in power, slowly yet surely. For Yesterday can never fight a winning battle—a battle which results in permanent victory.

What are the ideals for which Tomorrow's Education is fighting? Simply this: freedom from dogma, economy in time, increase of interest, a broader outlook and unification. We have already discussed the evils of religious restriction. That spectre must be abolished before we can seriously attempt any radical reforms.

Economy in time should be the easiest reform of all, but little attention has been paid to it. The average school-day extends for about six hours, of which one hour is rightly spent in recreation, while another is wrongly occupied with religious instruction. An obvious economy can be effected here. Do away with religious teaching (if we *must* have



it, let it be confined to Sunday school), and replace it with two hours moral teaching per week, which, unlike religious instruction (which becomes dully repetitive after a while), can expand as the class progresses. It must have a scientific basis, but Christian ideals need not be sacrificed. Purged of superstition, the life of Christ, for instance, is a splendid example for the young. But we must not be content with asking children to follow the ideals of Christ for some abstract reason, for youth is notoriously inquisitive and must know *why*.

We are, therefore, in need of a text-book on morals, a book which will define the obligations of man to himself and society. It must supplement explanations with examples from the great teachers of the past; it must outline the development of religions, of philosophic and scientific theories of life; it must be suggestive; it must give references to encourage further reading. It must be sufficient for the needs of the whole school career of a boy or girl, and must be a hand-book for both teachers and students. It must enable the teacher to explain from it in the lower classes, or to expand it in the upper, when it should be simple enough to allow the students

to understand it for themselves. Above all it must be absolutely without bias, either in favour of religion or science. Here then is an economy which will save at least one-sixth of our school-time, with additional advantages that need no emphasis.

We now have the other four hours of the school-day to consider. Wastage here depends chiefly on the mistaken notion that constant repetition is the only way to teach children. Dullness is one of the chief evils of our school system and, in consequence, repetition fails to accomplish in ten years what graphic pictorial teaching would accomplish in two. Everyone can support this statement from their own experience: the most eminent men have done so. For instance, Darwin has said that shortly after leaving school he could not even recall the Greek alphabet, while an eminent professor has declared that if he were called upon to sit for the London Matriculation he would surely fail.

Let us take Latin as an example in extension of our argument. The average student spends more time on this subject than on any other, yet a year after he has left school a simple quotation has him floored. After six years' study (or more) of grammar, vocabu-

lary, and particular texts, he passes an examination, but of Roman history and literature he knows practically nothing and cares less, for a love of the literature is not encouraged because the Latin authors were often heterodox. He has learned Latin only because the educational authorities believe that it helps the English course and furnishes good disciplinary training. So, when the young man looks back on his school-days, Latin provides him only with unpleasant memories of frequent punishments. They must be blocked out at once. And they are.

So six years of study have been almost entirely wasted. In that time the duller youth could have studied at least four languages, had he been taught more like a human being and less like a parrot. And not only could he have learned these languages, but he could have learned something of the life, the customs, the views and the ideals of the peoples to whom they belong. In doing this his permanent interest would have been aroused, and it would have brought him pleasure and profit throughout life. But all this requires revised textbooks, extensive series of pictures, interested and interesting teachers, and revised ideas of values.

And how can the under-paid scholastic, broken into the existing system, be interested in radical educational reforms? And if he is interested he knows only too well that the path of the reformer is strewn with thorns, that he is paid to teach according to the syllabus and not according to his own views. How can we expect the men of God, contemptuous as they are of the things of this earth, anxious for the day when they will shuffle off this mortal coil and join in the revelries of the Righteous, to regard education in terms of material values when they are convinced that all the education we need is to enable us to earn a living and appreciate 'spiritual truths'? No, we cannot expect educational reform to come from within the schools. It must be forced on them by public opinion.

We have shown the need for economy in the time spent in school. We have indicated that unless it is accompanied by unity, a broader outlook, and more interesting means of teaching, the mere saving of time and inclusion of additional subjects will only add to the burden of dullness which already hampers the unfortunate student. We have hinted at the manner in which these desiderata may be secured. We may consider the matter further

by using History as an example of how a subject should and should not be taught. In his *Outline of History* Mr. Wells has given us an admirable model of the manner in which it should be taught; the standard school histories are excellent examples of how it should not be (but is) taught. One is disturbing to dogma, but covers the entire story of the world and its people; the others are written in accordance with particular faiths (we have Catholic and Protestant histories!), and deal in their simpler forms with delightful legends about King Arthur and his Knights, and in their more complicated aspects with the dates of the battles fought from the time of the Norman Conquest to the Battle of Waterloo, or the evil (or good, according as the historian is Catholic or Protestant) character of Queen Elizabeth. The one has Unity and builds on a solid foundation; the others put us in possession of part of the furnishings of a house of which we have no conception. Which should our schools employ? I will not insult your intelligence with the answer.

In some respects education has progressed. The force of Huxley's opposition has almost exploded the old notion that it was only the classical scholar who could tread the road

to culture, and some branch of science is consequently now taught in most schools, usually Physics, Chemistry, or Botany. But, as the learning by rote of the names of historical personages, or the dates of historical events, do not constitute history, so the memorization of chemical elements or floral formulae do not constitute Science, or even Chemistry or Botany. Of what use are chemical or botanical details to the ordinary schoolboy? They do not fit him in later life to hold an appointment connected with these sciences; they hardly enable him to pursue them as private hobbies; they do not enlarge his outlook, for the mere fact of knowing that two parts of Hydrogen and one of Oxygen combine to form water, does not add very considerably to our knowledge of that necessity.

To be useful, science teaching in schools must be • general. It must cover all the sciences, and only sufficient details should be taught to enable the generalities to be understood. In combination with History it should give us a picture of the development of the Universe from nebula to modern men. For science we need another Wells. Or even the same Mr. Wells, for he is also a scientist, peculiarly competent to edit a general text-book of

science. Another *Outline* please, Mr. Wells!\*

We have said enough to show the lines along which the New Education must progress, enough to show the futility of the Old. It need hardly be added that the place for detailed teaching is the University, that the schools must confine themselves to a general survey of knowledge. They must give Youth a foundation for taking its place in the world as cultured, self-reliant, broad-minded, physically fit men and women; they must awaken interest in intellectual pursuits. With the state of opinion which will make such schools possible, our universities will expand, and our evening classes will grow, for they will not only be attended by students seeking the means to a better living, but even by busy men desirous of following up some particular intellectual interest. And there will be a revival of knowledge, such as the Ancients never saw at the height of their glory.

But this is an Utopia which can never be achieved until men stiffen up their sinews and

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\*Since this was written Mr. Wells, in collaboration with Julian Huxley and G. P. Wells, has partly anticipated the needs of the public with *The Science of Life*.

summon up their blood to free themselves from the tyranny of dogma. Meanwhile, we may console ourselves with the knowledge that the shackles of oppression are gradually being loosened, and an increasing number of people are realising that to think and act for themselves is more profitable than to 'follow foolish precedents and wink.'





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CHAPTER VIII  
RELIGION AND SEX

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## CHAPTER VIII

### RELIGION AND SEX

*A time will come when union by affection will be considered the most important, and men will hold in reprobation those conjugal unions in which union by affection is dissolved.*

HERBERT SPENCER

*We shall then see how hurtful the influence of Christianity has been on marriage . . . . . in order to manage earthly affairs well, it is not good to keep our looks constantly raised to the skies.*

LETOURNEAU

At one time I thought of opening this chapter with the remark that prudery is a thing of the past. I find on reflection, however, that it is very much a thing of the present. This is not surprising, for sex has been surrounded with mystery since the dawn of history—and we have seen that superstitions are not easily shed. Mystified by the

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curious functions of their sexual organs, primitive men created for them guiding deities which they worshipped. And even in modern India the great God Siva is everywhere represented by enormous representations of his reproductive organ, while the followers of Vishnu wear on their foreheads the sign of the generative functions.

In repressing phallic worship Christianity altered our attitude towards sex to the opposite extreme. The sexual relations became absolutely taboo. The monogamy which had grown out of polygamy and promiscuous intercourse received a new sanctity, but the root foundations of marriage were veiled in obscurity. The revulsion which phallism had produced persisted. So, while marriage was converted into a sacrament, celibacy was regarded as even holier, and cohabitation was considered a purely procreative act of which the least said the better.

Which has done more harm, the old expression or the new suppression? It is difficult to say. Phallic worship led to the unnatural elaboration of sexual pleasures, to Socratic love and prostitution in the name of religion; Christianity caused an elaboration of sexual repression which, in spite of the most dire

threats, has resulted in secret indulgence and hypocrisy. Prostitution in the Christian world is as flourishing a profession as it is in the heathen; in the one it is sponsored by the devil, in the other it receives the special protection of the Gods. What is the difference? Simply one of degree. In the old days the women of our class were regarded, along with swine and cattle, as one of the commodities necessary to the comfort of men; in the eyes of the church they are today almost equally subservient as a necessary adjunct to the procreation of new souls for the glory of God. The Christian wife may hope to become a seraph in the next world, but she remains a slave in this.

The evil influence of primitive religions on sexual life are too patent to require discussion. The more complicated tyranny of Christian dogma over the physical relations of men and women has, however, been deliberately obscured. Religion and sex have always influenced each other. And, as pagan religions allowed (and still permit) their priests the right of prelibation, so Christianity allowed its priests to exercise a proscriptive right over our sexual relations. Under Constantine, all penalties against so-called sexual sins were

increased. Adultery became a capital offence and continued to be so for centuries; marriage became an indissoluble sacrament, as it is today among the papists; and second marriages were regarded as blameworthy, as they are still regarded by the devout. Marriage was permitted only for procreative purposes, for the Christians inherited the Hebrew view of the evil origin of sexual intercourse. With the old legends of dualism to help them, the Jews invented the Fall of Eve in the Garden of Eden, which explained the Satanic derivation of cohabitation, while the forgiveness of Jehovah recognised the necessity for its continuance. Christianity adopted the paradox. And it has haunted the world through the ages.

But sex was not to be suppressed by a paradox or by proscription. Even at the height of Christian fanaticism it gave evidence of its power in the carnality of some of the most exalted pilots of the Christian vessel, while in those who supposed they had conquered themselves it appeared as certain curious manifestations, such as spiritual marriages to Christ or the Virgin. This unworldly wedlock is still one of the main factors which support the continuance of the monasteries

and the cloisters.

Among the laity the revolt of sex has been more marked. Freedom from the religious yoke in sexual matters has either been openly advocated or surreptitiously obtained. With such commanders as Havelock Ellis, Ellen Key, and Marie Stopes, the growing army which stands for sanity in sexual matters is slowly but surely driving the Churches to retreat, but the battle is not yet won. The religious control of marriage has been weakened; it will eventually be completely broken down, for no institution which is founded on intolerant restriction can stand the test of time. Disaffection has spread even within the camps of the Churches. The Catholics, for instance, will not countenance divorce and re-marriage, though they have been forced to recall their original position by permitting the annulment of unsatisfactory unions; the Protestants have compromised with society by permitting divorce and re-marriage, and with themselves by making these privileges as expensive and disgraceful as possible.

But old prejudices are not shed in a day. The cumulative effects of centuries of Christian domination have directly and indirectly



colored the outlook of the world, and Christian propaganda is naturally directed towards the maintenance of this unhealthy relationship. On the one hand we have a clamour for freedom, on the other a revival of mysticism. For every reformer there are a thousand infuriated ecclesiastics; for every Stopes there are a thousand paradoxical Chestertons. But, to those who can read the signs aright, the issue is beyond doubt. The religio-sexual teachings of such men as the Rev. John Hurstcot may earn the applause of the ignorant masses, but the fearless work of people like Marie Stopes is gaining an increasing following among the stronger intelligentsia.

Which will be victorious? Scientific facts about sex scientifically presented, or such balderdash as this passage, selected at random, from Hurstcot's *Love Ethics* (*Sex and the Divine*): "As we have seen, the mystic trinity defies all creation. The genitals of the female are, as shown in the tabernacle of Moses, a trinity corresponding to the outer court, the holy place, and the holy of holies. Dr. Stopes' mission is presumably an attack upon life in the holy of holies." The answer is obvious.

The effects of the influence of the

Christian religion on the relations between men and women can be easily visualised. It has caused more direct general unhappiness than any other form of proscription and tyranny. It has caused a total disregard for the necessity for sex education, and an indifference to the true responsibilities of parents and the state towards children; it has branded with the cruel stigma of bastardy the offspring of parents who defy its rules; it has helped prostitution; it has tried to compel married couples manifestly unfitted for a mutual sexual life to continue their miserable existences; and, strange as the paradox may sound, it has created divorce.

Need we expand these theses? Sexual facts are either veiled in euphemism or totally ignored. The attitude of women in a 'delicate condition', and of others towards them or the 'heads' of the homes in which 'certain happy events' have taken place, is almost pathetically ridiculous. Regarding sex as intrinsically indecent, Christian parents teach their children that before they wore their first safety-pin, their souls—those elusive elves which the psychists call 'astral bodies'—wandered about in space until a benevolent stork carried them to a convenient cabbage

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patch in this 'world of sorrows'. This is the way in which youthful curiosity is satisfied. So children grow up to be either totally ignorant about the functions and subtleties of sex, or with perverted views about it, to which the hedging of their parents has contributed.

What is the result? After assiduously sowing his wild oats, with the unwritten sanction of society, or after a period of repression and unnatural celibacy, the average man marries a 'good woman'. His preliminary training causes him either brutally to ravish her on the wedding and succeeding nights, or to blow out the lights and, with a preparatory invocation to the deity to bless the forthcoming union, to release the devil within him in the courtyard of the tabernacle. One way or the other the equally ignorant woman is disgusted and repulsed. Her Prince Charming turns out to be a beast or a nincompoop, but after all, says she, this must be marriage—and the woman's share of the holy state is submission, procreation *ad libitum*, and the care of her husband's gastronomic requirements.

So she accepts the situation, and goes through life without ever attaining a true sexual maturity. Or, less frequently, she

satisfies her desires with the help of a clandestine lover, who teaches his willing pupil the things he would consider improper to teach his own wife. The husband on the other hand, tired of ravishing the human equivalent of a marble statue, or believing it wrong to defile his chaste wife with passion, seeks satisfaction among the more artistic inmates of brothels, where he gets 'a good time' and perhaps venereal disease; or, through constant repression, grows more and more sour daily. The net result of this ignorance or hypocrisy is an active or passive disharmony throughout their married lives.

And so the majority of Christian couples go on, the more rational to the divorce courts, the less rational to early graves. And, as men are constantly growing more, but not completely, sensible, divorces are naturally on the increase. The orthodox will say, of course, that our crowded divorce courts are the result of unbridled passions consequent on religious laxity, but it would be more correct to ascribe them to sexual ignorance, or sexual knowledge which has come too late to permit the satisfactory continuance of physical and mental intercourse.

This is not an exaggerated picture. It

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is as true of the majority of men and women today as ever it was, though the minority is increasing. The cure is essentially simple, though practically difficult. For, all that is needed is the abolition of religious interference, a sound sex education, and absolute freedom. Have marriage and the care of children by the parents if you will, but let it be founded on common-sense and not on dogma. Have free love and the care of children by the state if you will, but let this arrangement also rest on the solid foundation of true knowledge. It does not matter very much what system we adopt to guide the relations of the sexes, so long as it is intrinsically sensible and free from religious interference, for sexual intercourse only concerns the people of this Kingdom of Earth, and not that of the Christian Olympus.

The world is still in a stage of experiment, but it has progressed far enough to know that some experiments must be rejected, that while others are progressing they must be conducted with an open mind and a spirit of tolerance. If some people prefer to marry (and marriage will continue until women grow out of their inherited slave mentality) let them marry, but let them not regard those who are not married as sinners and their children as outcasts; if

others prefer to follow the doctrines of Ellen Key, let them do so, but let them also not despise those who prefer the so-called safety of the marriage bond.

The best system will eventually win. Personally, I am sure that a responsible free love will someday replace marriage, as we understand it, though there are enormous economic and social difficulties in the way—difficulties created by religion. Its universal adoption, or universally early marriage with easy facilities for divorce (which is much the same thing), is the only means of successfully dealing with the problem of prostitution. That we are already progressing towards this ideal is proved by the fact that to an increasing number of people the marriage certificate has already come to mean nothing more than a sign of parental responsibility, which in practice generally means irresponsibility. When the State assumes this charge—and they can assume it without altering the ideals of good parental influence—even this certificate will become unnecessary.

We are progressing towards the ideal, but it must also be recognised that we are still far from reaching it. For even the much maligned modern girls have not shed much more than

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the flannel petticoats and the more obvious hypocrisies of their grandmothers. They are destroying, but generally speaking they are not yet actively constructing. The modern girl may yield more readily (or shall we say more openly?) to the final embrace without the protection of matrimony, but in doing this she is not usually actuated by philosophical views about the freedom of sex, but by purely animal impulses which she often regrets later. Yet, the mere fact that she is shedding prejudices implies that she will also build up a new moral code.

The modern girl and the modern boy are encouraging signs. For even if modern youth still sows its wild oats it is truly said that the oats are of better quality. We should assist them completely to overthrow the antiquated dogmas of their ancestors, we should assist them to realise the happiness and the broadened outlook which comes from pure sexual relationships, based on a sound knowledge of the functions of sex and of mutual responsibilities; we should assist each one of them truthfully to say with the poet:

So grew my own small life complete  
As Nature obtained her best of me,  
One born to love you, Sweet.

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CHAPTER IX

EUGENICS AND G. K. CHESTERTON

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## CHAPTER IX

### EUGENICS AND G. K. CHESTERTON

*It is possible that while we are governed by 'high-grade morons' there will be no practical recognition of the dangers which threaten us. But those who understand the situation must leave no stone unturned in warning their fellow countrymen; for the future of civilisation is at stake.*

W. R. INGE

Mr. Chesterton, irrational, religious Mr. Chesterton is a charming teller of tales. In his book on eugenics, he tells the familiar story of the magic machine which would grind anything the owner wanted when he spoke a certain word, and cease when he said another. One day it was asked to grind some salt for an officers' mess on board ship, but unfortunately the word that stopped it was forgotten: the machine went on grinding, and the ship sank laden with salt.

Similarly, the Chestertons of the world

keep grinding, but grinding voluntarily, thousands of pages of extravagant verbiage, narrow-mindedness and bad sense. And, similarly, the ship of Civilisation is likely to be sunk, sunk with this overflow of aimless rhetoric. We wish we knew the magic word which would stop this excessive and disastrous production; but we do not. We can, however, take the good Dean's advice and persuade those who may be lost to sail in a safer ship—in a ship where the salt is provided in practical salt-cellars, and not from a magic grinding machine.

This is the reason for this essay. It is not a defence of science or of eugenics, but is merely an attempt to assist in correcting the effects of such 'strange ebullitions' as Mr. Chesterton's. Mr. Chesterton indirectly admits that he has no right to write authoritatively on any scientific subject, for he boasts that he has never had any training in science, and approaches the question only from a 'moral' and 'social' standpoint. We may, therefore, treat his 'scientific writings' with the respect we would accord to a work on relativity by a mathematician unable to appreciate more dimensions than two.

It is easy to deride a science and build up a

lengthy argument against it (an argument which is convincing only to the arguer and his blind followers), but it is more difficult to study it. I am reminded of the story of Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, who went down on the last day of the British Association Meeting at Oxford in 1860 to 'smash Darwin'—a hero of biology, whom Chesterton naturally considers impossible and 'dull'. After an hour and a half of vehement eloquence the Bishop concluded by inquiring whether it was through his grandfather or grandmother that Darwin claimed his descent from an ape. Huxley was there to defend his friend and, in a part of his masterly reply, is reputed to have said: "I asserted—and I repeat—that a man has no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for his grandfather. If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling, it would rather be a *man*—a man of restless and versatile intellect—who, not content with success in his own sphere of activity, plunges into scientific questions with which he has no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and to distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeals to religious

prejudice." The latter part of these words are strikingly applicable to Mr. Chesterton and those who, in spirit if not in style, resemble him.

One is surprised at the profundity of Mr. Chesterton's ignorance of science. He tells us confidently, for example, that entomology can only be studied by an entomologist or an insect, and that it is necessary to cease to be a man in order to study a microbe. Here is an idea for a play even more imaginative than any of Karel Capek's. I should delight to see the entomological staff of the Natural History Museum in London represented by spectacled praying-mantids, the staff of Kew Gardens by frock-coated examples of the national vegetation, and the Professors of the Pasteur Institute by enlarged and animated microbes!

Truly is it said that Mr. Chesterton is the 'Master of Paradox', but he is a master who introduces his paradoxes everywhere, with something of the exuberance with which certain Italian masters of Art introduced a cherub into their paintings wherever they could find a little room for him. He has complained that his paradoxes may not be understood, and personally, I admit, I am often quite incapable of following the logic with which he seeks

to confuse his readers. I know I am very ignorant, for several dear old ladies have told me so. Of course, they understand Chesterton: it is fashionable to do so these days, and for good Roman Catholics it is imperative.

Here is another example of a Chestertonian paradox. He supposes a man to say to him that the Church of Rome had been guilty of great cruelties, and "what would he think of me if I answered (he queries), the Church is expressly bound to meekness and charity; and therefore cannot be cruel." Mr. Chesterton knows his history and I need not, therefore, point out to him such minor events as the Spanish Inquisition or the doings of 'bloody' Mary, but I may reply to his question by asking one. Suppose a man said to me that Smith was guilty of murder. What would Mr. Chesterton think of me if I replied: "Smith is expressly bound by every law to treat his neighbour's person with respect; and therefore cannot be a murderer." In his vigorous language he would tell me, as he has told eugenists, that I am a 'yawning idiot'. And he would be right.

Like most 'moralists' Mr. Chesterton is continually telling us, though delicately, what

weak, miserable creatures we are. He says, for instance, that "a young man may keep himself from vice by continually thinking of disease or the Virgin Mary," and adds that there is no doubt as to which course is the more wholesome. One may agree that it is more wholesome to keep away from vice by continually thinking of the Virgin Mary, but there is a third alternative which is the most wholesome of all. And this is that a man should keep himself free from vice merely by being thoroughly acquainted with its far-reaching consequences, and by possessing a serious sense of responsibility. Chestertonians may say that this is an immoral outlook, as 'vice' should be avoided for purely religious reasons, but they ignore the fact that if certain human actions were not followed by harm they could not be regarded as evil. (One wonders, in passing, what a living Virgin would say to being regarded as a straw to keep weak humans from sinking in the seas of immorality and disease.) A lady, who knew Professor Huxley's rigid code of morals and upright life, was once told that the great agnostic held no thoughts of spiritual assistance or future reward or punishment. "Then

I think," she said, "Professor Huxley is the best man I have ever known." I think so too.

Mr. Chesterton's morals and mine differ in some important particulars. For instance, in one of his numerous examples to prove a single point, he supposes a doctor to say: "Jones has that twitch in the nerves, and he may burn down the house", and adds that it is not the medical detail we fear but the moral upshot. He thinks we should say: "Let him twitch, as long as he doesn't burn down the house." This is not only decidedly selfish and therefore irreligious, but also unpractical. Personally I should be as much concerned about the possible burning of my house at Jones's hands as Mr. Chesterton, but where we differ is that I should point out to Jones that he needs medical attendance or else his twitch may develop into a nervous breakdown. I flatter myself that this would be truly religious and incidentally practical; for, by helping Jones to strengthen his nerves, I would remove any possibility of them causing him to accidentally destroy my property. But even if Jones were one of those unreasonable creatures who resent any outside interference with such intimate things as nerves, I should



still do my best to convince him of his danger, though I ran the risk of his deliberately attempting to set fire to my house in his first fit of temper.

In these days of enquiry, religion is often inefficacious when receiving no support from science. In earlier times it may have been possible to keep a man from becoming over-stout by religious outbursts on laziness and gluttony, but representations of bygone worthies are instructive commentaries on the success of the method. I am one of those irreligious creatures who believe that the body should be kept within certain proportions for health's sake alone; and my heresy is backed by religion for the 'body is the temple of the soul', and all temples should be worthy in outward appearance of the spirit within. We of this immoral century are rightly proud of our health and virility, a change from the port-drinking, beef-eating age, which has been effected, not by religion, but by prosaic little primers on physiology and hygiene (Mr. Chesterton is not tolerant of hygienists) and 'horrible looking' diagrams of our digestive, muscular and nervous systems.

I find that so far I have said practically nothing about eugenics; but neither has

Mr. Chesterton in 184 pages of a book presumably on eugenics, but really on nothing in particular. He gives us so many startling paradoxes; talks so much about politics, religion, war and innumerable other things; indulges in so many personalities, such as indirectly calling eugenists 'progressive swine', or directly pointing out to us the defects in Dr. Karl Pearson's genealogical tree, and naively telling us that he is half a German and Dr. Steinmetz a whole one (in the vain hope that this fact alone should induce us to distrust their scientific work) that we are only just able to realise that he is trying to give us an argument against eugenics.

It is strange that at the commencement of all this useless verbiage, he tells us that eugenists are Euphemists, or people who are soothed by long words and startled by short ones. The discovery so pleases him that he proceeds to give us some ridiculous examples to prove his point. He cannot see that in scientific writing precision and clarity sometimes requires the use of 'long words'. He would have us believe that all eugenists are addicted to *sesquipedalia verba*, adding quite irrelevantly that they live in Mayfair, smoke excellent cigars produced from excellent.

cigar-cases, and wear gold spectacles or perhaps an eyeglass! I can assure Mr. Chesterton that if any eugenist thought him a fool and had reason to tell him so, he would not say: "My dear Sir, observational data leads me to the inevitable conclusion that you are in the unhappy condition consequent on cerebral paresis." On the contrary, he would convey his belief in a word if he did not emphasize it with an adjective.

We feel about Mr. Chesterton much as scientists feel about Professor Mivart: that he would have been truly great, if he had restricted his literary energies to certain channels and controlled his tendency to let his orthodoxy conquer his common-sense. Mr. Chesterton might have been a giant in distributing the seeds of knowledge; it is sad that he should prefer instead to broadcast the germs of ignorance. He is entirely intolerant of science and, by a curious method of reasoning, has come to the conclusion that science—the greatest philanthropic agent of the world—is likely to wreck humanity some day. Materially, Mr. Chesterton has no regard for the future. Any measures which may better the men of the future by restricting the irresponsibility of those of the present annoy

him intensely, for he is afraid that the even tenor of his own life may be disturbed. Perhaps he would run round his garden ten times if his confessor insisted on this as a penance for some dietetic excess, but he will have no 'interference' from anyone else.

This is why he is against preventive medicine, such as vaccination, comparing the abstract with the concrete in these words: "Vaccination, in its hundred years of experiment, has been disputed almost as much as baptism in its approximate two thousand. But it seems quite natural to our politicians to enforce vaccination; and it would seem madness to enforce baptism." With this impressive analogy, he thinks he has proved his point. He will not admit that though the value of vaccination has often been disputed, it has been disputed by people whose right to dispute is disputable. He will not admit that anti-vaccination campaigns are often distinctly advantageous to their promoters, though only recently a well-known West End draper found such a campaign useful in the quick disposal of last year's what-nots. Novel advertisements are the rage these days.

This is why he resents the invaluable efforts of doctors to improve the nation's

health, saying a healthy man does not think about health. If Mr. Chesterton does not think about his health, he has my sympathies. He proceeds with alarming logic: "Health is simply Nature, and no naturalist ought to have the impudence to understand it. Health, one may say, is God; and no agnostic has any right to claim His acquaintance." If health is Nature, the diphtheria bacilli being a part of Nature are then health; if health is God, then a healthy dray-horse knows what God is. Scientists, in spite of Mr. Chesterton, are trying, with considerable success, to understand what Nature is, and as, on his own argument, Nature is God, they know more about God than Mr. Chesterton.

This is why he derides the most honourable suggestion that ever came from any man—the suggestion that we owe a duty to the Great Unborn. He thinks that the wife has a greater claim on her husband than their unborn child. If this is so, Love, the highest of human emotions, is selfish—hideously and unutterably selfish. Anyone united in true love would be honourable enough to realise the immense responsibility they owe to the possible result of their emotions, and would welcome rather than deride a noble science

which seeks to help them in this realisation. It is futile to tell me that two loving consumptives, or two sufferers from any hereditary complaint, who strongly desire a child should place no restrictions on their desire. It is futile to tell me or any sane man this in such words as Mr. Chesterton's: "The sickness or soundness of a consumptive may be a clear and calculable matter. The happiness or unhappiness of a consumptive is quite another matter, and is not calculable at all. What is the good of telling people that if they marry for love, they may be punished by being the parents of Keats or the parents of Stevenson? Keats died young; but he had more pleasure in a minute than a eugenicist gets in a month." The eugenicist does not tell people they shall be the parents of Keats or Stevenson, but he does say that marriage and procreation should be based on knowledge and expert advice. And if the expert says—and he has a mass of experimental fact to justify his conclusions—that procreation would result in diseased children then the duty is clear. But if it is very probable that it would be safe to have a child, I am not fool enough to think that the slight probability against it should keep them childless for life. It is truly said

that one can never be absolutely sure of anything, but if we must gamble let us gamble on the side of strong probability or not at all.

Eugenists are not gamblers in souls, but advisers on the more understandable though highly complex question of the material future of man. "The object of eugenics," in the words of Galton, its founder, "is the study of agencies under social control which may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally." Eugenists do not theorise in the abstract on happiness or unhappiness. The historical Job may have been perfectly happy though sorely afflicted, but the fact remains that in this age people are, on their own confession, never entirely happy if diseased. In his successful life one wonders how much Mr. Chesterton has seen of the actual effects of hereditary disease. If he has seen very little, I would advise him to visit the great London hospitals, to see the anguish of a helpless babe covered with syphilitic sores or racked with a terrible cough, or the more subtle anguish of the vacant look indicative of insanity—the results of the lust of dastardly parents in the name of Love. Let us hope that Mr. Chesterton's book will not

have the effect of providing them with a plausible excuse for their crimes.

Mr. Chesterton is easily alarmed. Where science is concerned, he gropes in the dark and, like a frightened child, cries out at goblins that are not there. Some day I hope he will be given light and be restored to equanimity. His greatest fear is that science will forcibly employ extreme measures through the medium of state legislation. He fears that eugenists will attempt forcibly to breed men like horses; he fears they will lock up all men who have a queer look in their eyes; he fears that two people with long noses will not be permitted to marry as this character may be unusually dominant in their first, second or third generation; he fears that if a man's great-grandfather twice removed had died of consumption he will not be permitted to marry a woman who is strongly liable to colds in the chest. In some unintelligible way he thinks that eugenists want to find out what they want, and works himself into a frenzy because they desire the establishment of research, saying that research is not discovery, for discovery, I presume, is the monopoly of *English* adventurers and essayists. He thinks that eugenists are vivisectionists, cruel wielders of



the insidious scalpel on unfortunate human beings, a statement which is news to me. He is even against experiments on thoroughly anaesthetized animals for the benefit of humanity. He loves his bitch but hates mankind.

And Mr. Chesterton is alarmed for nothing. If eugenics was what he thinks it is, if I were acquainted with half as much experimental fact against it as there is for it, I would be as much an anti-eugenisist as Mr. Chesterton is, and so would hundreds of thoughtful people who now see in eugenics the salvation of future, and the amelioration of present, humanity. I am not a professional eugenist, but only one in the sense that I appreciate the value of the science. I am one of the 'weakest' of those 'helpless persons' whom Mr. Chesterton calls Endeavourers, in a striking chapter on the specific distinctions between the various kinds of eugenists. Were I replying to him in detail, I could assign most anti-eugenists with equal certainty to each of the half-dozen or so subheadings in one or the other of which we are so politely placed. Mr. Chesterton and I are opposites, but in some ways he is as much an endeavourer as I am. This being so, I recommend to his notice

his own words: "the best thing the honest Endeavourer could do would be to make an honest attempt to know what he is doing. And not do anything else until he has found out."

Arguing against science, he finds solace and supposed proof in the fact that Germany, the country which 'had long been the model State of all those more rational moralists who saw in science the ordered salvation of society' should have been the main cause of the European conflict.\* What a striking argument! What had German scientists to do with German militarism? If anything, German scientists were in the main against the war—a statement which has some proof in the fact that the best and most scientific book against war that was ever written was not written by a harmless essayist who, having exhausted his flow of eloquence about Spring or the important question of "Coming and Going", sees in the subject of war the chance to add to his banking account, but by Dr. G. F. Nicolai, a professor of Physiology at Berlin University. And if a scientific country goes to war, is that at the bidding of science, or is it through the political lust of a few misguided patriots? The Italian seizure of

Corfu was morally no better than the German invasion of Belgium, but only a mental cripple would suggest any connexion between this and the fact that Italy is the centre of Roman Catholicism.

Science has ever been magnanimous; it alone has never been guilty of persecution; it alone has never caused the annihilation of people who did not correspond with its views. In seeking the aid of state legislation, it does not propose to do so now. Scientists have tried to gain the co-operation of the people and to show the value of science in true progress, but they have succeeded only partly, for the vision of the people is still obscured by the myths of the past. State legislation in its connexion with science would be entirely unnecessary if the majority of the people were not suffering from mental myopia. The blind man traversing a narrow mountain path may assert that he is quite safe, and if he will not accept help from one who can see, it is only humane forcibly to guide him to safety, even if in doing so we place a restriction on his liberty. Science is not petty, which is what those slaves who have a superlative appreciation of liberty are. The scientist will not say: "Let him break his neck unknowingly, but let him do

what he likes." The scientist cannot say: "Let a man with an infectious disease live on an island full of people amongst whom it is unknown; let him infect its inhabitants, but let him live where he likes." If scientists said such things I would be a student of ancient oriental brass-ware.

Coming to the end of this essay, I cannot help reflecting that I have not altogether followed the principles of urbane controversy, but then neither has Mr. Chesterton. Scientifically viewed, it is in parts perhaps a little ridiculous, but then so is Mr. Chesterton's work. His book does not admit of cold scientific criticism and in criticising it I have borne in mind the French proverb that there is nothing which kills like ridicule, particularly when its object is really ridiculous. I hope I have succeeded in pointing out the fallacy of placing faith in the expositions of such writers as Mr. Chesterton, who try to impress with verbiage false ideas which would be self-exposed in simpler language.

Macaulay was a great writer; I do not deny that Mr. Chesterton may also be a great writer, but like Macaulay, he too often sacrifices accuracy to style. What is worse is that his orthodoxy—an impatient critic has spelled

it 'authorodoxy'—should make him so prejudiced against science as to make him lose sight of the balance he so much commends, and commit himself to the astounding opinions which he has expressed against it. When writing on Dickens or Laughter, Chesterton is supreme; when writing even on his own conversion to the Papal fold he is tolerable; but the most polite opinion I can express about his outbursts against science is the opinion of Dean Inge, that they are 'strange ebullitions'. If I wrote on Laughter, I would probably be laughed at; if some years hence I write a semi-autobiography, I may be expecting too much if I expect even toleration; but if at present I write a seemingly authoritative work on Czecho-Slovakian politics the critics who count would abuse it as much as the critics who do not count will abuse *The Kingdom of Earth*. For I know as much about Czecho-Slovakian politics as Mr. Chesterton knows about science, particularly eugenics.

POSTSCRIPT.—The above essay was published some years ago as a review of Mr. Chesterton's *Eugenics and Other Evils* (Cassell: 1922) and is included here because there is no where else to include it. It has some

bearing on the previous essays in as much as it shows the undesirable effects of dogmatic religion on a man of considerable intellectual attainments. Moreover, the subject dealt with—I mean eugenics and not Mr. Chesterton—is of the greatest importance in this Kingdom of Earth. In my own country it is of more importance than anywhere else.



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CHAPTER X

THE FOLLY OF WAR

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## CHAPTER X

### THE FOLLY OF WAR

*Every man and woman should energetically support all efforts made for devising some more sensible and humane means of composing international differences than the destructive and futile methods upon which reliance has been hitherto unsuccessfully placed.*

FIELD-MARSHALL SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON

On a certain day many years ago I was lunching with the members of the Unorthodox Club. We had just finished a heated discussion on Marx, when our attention was attracted by a disturbance in the street. The sound of the measured tramp of hundreds of heavily booted feet and the wailing of bag-pipes came nearer and nearer. "Has war been declared again," asked the Lepidopterist, "or is the whole blasted army on parade?" He prod savagely at a potato, for few things upset him more than the bag-pipes. "Curse it," he groaned, making another vicious jab as the pipers achieved a particularly difficult note.

"Hush, little boy," said the Lady Botanist, "let mamma show it the pretty sojers." She went to the window, we following. "Don't they look pretty," she continued, "in their baby coats and little green skirts? Don't you people wish you were great big soldiers, defenders of England, home and beauty?" There was a sadness in her voice which belied the bantering words. "Wouldn't you like to be like that tubby fellow over there, with the walrus moustache and all those gorgeous ribbons? Wouldn't it be grand to feel that each one of those ribbons has marked your services to England; that each one of those ribbons records untold suffering to your family, untold suffering to innumerable homes in the enemy country; that each one of those ribbons stamps you as little more than a murderer and a brute? Isn't it strange that a man may not shoot another in a fair fight over a personal quarrel, though armies may decimate each other at the command of a few so-called statesmen sitting behind guarded doors? Oh! how I hate to see a soldier. Most of them look very fine I admit, but the thought of the potentiality behind an army makes me hate soldiering in general, though I pity soldiers individually. Every time I see a regiment passing I feel like rushing

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out and stopping them, and telling them just what their profession is, telling them that they are just dressed up dolls who are given ribbons and rewards for butchering and being butchered. If all soldiers stopped to think about their occupation, no nation in the world would have an army. Look at that poor blind man over there in the gutter. He was once a man as fine as any of those who have marched by him. He was a soldier like them; he gave his best for England. And what is he now? Just a beggar, scarcely even noticed by passing humanity. And there are thousands like him all over the world, starving and with starving families, all through man's lust for war. I hate war, and I hate the men who are responsible for it. Instead of being proud of their soldier boys, women should make it their duty to understand the brutality of war and to make their men-folk understand it too. If women did that, statesmen could declare war as often as they liked but no armies would ever be raised."

She paused as the regiment passed. "Oh! but do excuse me," said she, leading the way back to our table, "but I always get carried away when I think of war and its consequences." The Businessman looked thoughtful

as we continued our lunch. Presently he spoke. "But surely you people ought not to be against war. For, from what I have read, biology supports war; it is necessary in the struggle for existence. War is a deeply rooted instinct, and from the earliest times man has protected his woman or his property with the club. And, as instincts are inherited, how can we rid ourselves of war? Besides it is necessary for thinning the population when the earth becomes over-run with the results of our fecundity. It also has many other useful results. It has helped the development of art, it fosters courage, dependability and self-sacrifice; and soldiering and volunteering provides a disciplinary training which is a very useful factor in the making of good citizens."

Our friend had his answer that day, and he rose from that luncheon table with altered opinions. In view of the troubled state of the world today, of rumours of war on the one hand and attempts to abolish war on the other, it might be profitable to consider the biologist's attitude towards war, for it was the biological arguments which convinced him of the folly of war.

We may begin by saying that biology

produces no evidence in favour of war, that nothing in its teaching can be interpreted as suggesting the necessity for belligerency. The struggle for existence is not synonymous with war, for in nature this struggle only exists between different species. It is a struggle so constant and severe that internecine warfare would make it impossible for the species to continue. So, as Lucretius long ago said, we do not find one lion attacking another, or one boar feeding on another; for animals are much too busy searching for food and struggling against their natural enemies to do that.

In this struggle for existence Man is also involved. His right of bread is disputed by the weevil, his right to a healthy body by the bacteria. His very existence can be terminated in few hours by the attack of some invisible germ. In this struggle, riches are of no avail; king and beggar alike fall before the indiscriminating bacteria. And yet, attacked though he is on every side, man commits the criminal folly of drawing the sword against his fellows, and of prostituting the gifts of science in the attempt.

We have said that warfare in the species itself is unnatural. And in man it is quite unnecessary for the so-called necessity of

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'thinning the population'. It has been calculated by Prof. Nicolai that, according to our present mode of living, about 150 human beings could live on one square kilometre of land and the earth could comfortably support a population of more than 22,000 millions. If man was able, and he is able, to become more independent of plants and animals for his supply of energy, and if the available energy was utilised by him to the full, some 3,000,000,000 *million* people could be supported without trespassing on each other's domains. These figures may seem abstract and fantastic, but they nevertheless represent potentialities. Now, if we consider that the total population of the world at present is only about 1,500 millions pseudo-biological twaddle about war being necessary to thin the population becomes glaringly evident as a feeble excuse to cover the viciousness of man.

And, even if we granted that it is necessary to thin the population, the inefficacy of war is proved by the fact that in the last war the total loss of human life was, according to various computations, between six and ten million, while in India malaria alone exacts a toll in the same period of over four million

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lives, the total loss due to parasitic diseases over an area similar to that covered by the last war being almost incalculable. If war only involved the mere loss of human life the objections to it would be slightly decreased, but it is a barrier to progress, causes economic disruption, increases suffering and misery in a manner that no disease can now do, and, whereas in our natural struggle for existence only the fittest survive, in war it is usually the fittest that perish, leaving a large proportion of future humanity to be propagated by the mentally deficient and physically impaired.

It has been said that war is a deeply rooted instinct, but instincts are not always useful. We all know how the moth will fly to the flame, an instinct which invariably leads to its own destruction, though this was not always so. There was a time when there were no lamps, and the moth flew up out of the darkness towards the genial light of the sun; and its flight was beneficial. Here is a case of an instinct once useful, but now purposeless and destructive. Are we, like the moth, unable to rise above the instincts we have inherited? I think not. For man is a rational animal capable of preserving those instincts which are useful, and of eliminating



those which are harmful. In exercising our reason it is natural that we should often err, but liability to error is the result of freedom. And while instincts are undoubtedly infallible, they are also blind. The inability to change them has been the doom of many an animal species, and if man will not rise above his instincts, it is possible that he will share the same fate, not because he could not change, but because he would not change. But even if history teaches us that war is a very ancient institution, biology proves that peaceful tribal instincts were even more primeval; if the cave-man did roam about with a club as a walking stick, his arboreal ancestors swung peacefully from the tree-tops and lived gregariously to protect themselves from their animal contemporaries.

Ruskin has said that without war there could be no art. Is this true of war as we know it today? Surely not, for the type of war which influenced art can scarcely be compared with modern warfare. The most decisive battle of the Spartans was won with the total loss of eight cleanly killed men, while all through the Great War about as many men died every minute, many others being disfigured beyond all countenance, or poisoned

and left to face the world as mental and physical wrecks. Such war can only be soul destroying. And the wars of the future (if we have wars in the future) will be even worse. If we do grant, however, that war has influenced art, it would still be impossible to say that there would have been no art had mankind never known war. We must agree with Ruskin that the greatest artistic work produced by the Egyptians are the sculptures of their kings going out to battle, or receiving the homage of conquered armies; but, had the Egyptians been a purely peaceful people, they might have produced equally fine sculptures of their priests going to worship, equally beautiful frescoes detailing their scientific and other accomplishments, equally pleasing pictures of cattle grazing in their fields. The weakness of Ruskin's argument is further proved by the fact that 'art' owes much more to the eroticism of the Greeks and the encouragement of the Christian Church than to war.

We may now deal with the statement that war develops courage, discipline, and self-sacrifice. We must admit that war has helped to produce these excellent virtues, but it is a low moral standard in which one man's strength is based on another's weakness; one

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man's courage on another's cowardice, and discipline and efficiency on the fear of being killed by one's enemies. Moreover, in modern warfare, while the best qualities in man are often brought out, the worst are made even more conspicuous. The physical conditions it produces are conducive to debauchery, and the moral conditions of modern armies both before and after the battle speaks little for their disciplinary training. We need not discuss the high percentage of venereal infection and drunkenness among soldiers, the crimes of violence against women and children, or the other evidences of degradation which were daily recounted and exaggerated during the last war.

Even Ruskin condemned modern warfare, as it was understood in his day, asking at the conclusion of an eloquent passage: "What book of account shall record the cost of your work; what book of judgment sentence the guilt of it." It is indeed strange that a man of such intellect should have desired a reversion to old standards of war, instead of devoting his genius to outlining an ideal of peace.

In spite of our argument against it, we have been compelled to admit that war has

been to some extent a moral force. Can we replace it with something better? The question has already been answered by William James in his essay on the moral equivalent of war. He recommends, as far as I remember, the conscription of fit humanity to civic pursuits, to form a disciplined army to engage in the struggle for existence, to fight against nature, and to utilise her gifts to the full. And he pleads that such a conscription, combined with the state of public opinion that required it, and the moral fruits it would bear, would preserve in a pacific civilisation all those manly virtues which generals and admirals think would disappear in peace.

We see now that war is without support either from biology, ethics, or philosophy, but when we consider the sort of education we receive it is easy to understand why so many think otherwise. Every school history is full of accounts of war and its effects, while a great deal of the literature we study is only a panegyric of war. We are taught to regard war as something inevitable, and soldiering as the highest profession next to the church. Even our mild old schoolmar'ms delight in nothing so much as an account of a bloody battle, or the deeds of some uniformed Jack

the Ripper. History, it has been rightly said, is largely a panorama of jingoism and militarism, but it points a moral I have never heard any school teacher indicate; and that is the utter ruin of all militant civilisations.

Where are the great empires founded on war and oppression? The Greek empire came to an end with the Peloponnesian War; Spain, the empire of the sixteenth century on which the sun never set, is today but a second-rate power; while all that now remains in Europe of the once vast Ottoman Empire is an inconsequent city on the Bosphorus. The names of Alexander, of Tamerlane, of Attila, are already almost forgotten, while the names of advocates of peace, like Christ, Buddha, or Confucius are as bright as they were a thousand years ago. Truly did Lao-Tse say: "Is a man strongly armed? Then shall he *not* win." Chinese history itself proves this Chinese saying. For, during the Tartar invasion of China these robbers invariably gained the victory, but, as a prominent Chinaman has remarked: 'Where are the Tartars now?'

If England continues to believe with Ruskin that her soldiers must be her tutors, and the captains of her army the captains of

her mind, then the day must come when the great British Empire will be laid in the dust as militarism abolished the Greek and Roman Empires of old. Disintegration has already set in, as those who read and think may know. In India, for example, the political autocracy of England is clearly doomed; in this country the word of Gandhi alone, the greatest pacifist of this age, is already more powerful than all the guns and soldiers of its cantonments. England must lose India as she lost America; she may lose her empire as the Greeks lost theirs; but England and the world will gain thereby. For, empires are a source of envy, and envy results in war. Without jealously guarded possessions, without vested interests, universal brotherhood and peace is possible; with it strife is inevitable, for the slave is ever restive of the yoke of even the kindest master, while the master is ever envied by his less successful fellows. Fortunately, the world is slowly realising this; its thinkers at least have already realised that international freedom, amity and co-operation is a surer guide to progress than national greed with its attendant belligerency.

War may have imparted a dynamic quality to humanity in the past, but we now

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know that in a world of peace, in the vastness of knowledge, interests equally dynamic may be found, while opportunities for courage, sacrifice and all the other virtues supposedly born of war would be equally abundant. It was Shakespeare who said that peace dulls a kingdom, but we are finding that even Shakespeare was wrong. For, it is a sense of pseudo-contentment, of being perfectly happy while one has a bed to sleep in and bacon and eggs for breakfast, which dulls humanity, not peace.

And so we may rejoice in the gathering world-movement against war, a movement which has gained a million-fold since the first conscientious objector faced the crowds in Hyde Park; we may rejoice in the fact that the effects of the last war have made another world war practically impossible; we may rejoice in the knowledge that humanity is slowly marching towards the state so beautifully depicted by Shelley:

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed but man:  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless,  
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king  
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but Man.











